



# iPodlounge

## Buyers' Guide 2004

From the world's leading **independent** source of iPod information

Inside: **Award-winning iPods and accessories**  
Apple's new 60-Gigabyte **iPod Photo** and **U2 iPod**  
Free iPod **software, support, and chat forums**

**How-to** Transfer music from iPod to PC and Convert your WMAs to iPod  
Contest winners, photo galleries, the history of the iPod, and more!



Photo Courtesy Apple Computer

## holiday gift guide



TrailVue

MetroVue



Sportsuit Sleeve

Sportsuit Convertible



Sportsuit Runabout

Sportsuit Convertible



Sportsuit Safari

Sportsuit Santa



Sportsuit Sleeve

C.E.O. Classic

## Cases for all your iPods.

mini	<b>TRAILvue</b> Rugged, stylish protection
mini	<b>metrovue</b> Edgy, urban cases
mini	<b>sportsuit sleeve</b>
mini	<b>sportsuit convertible</b> Removable armband included
mini	<b>sportsuit runabout</b>
4G	<b>sportsuit convertible</b> Removable armband included
mini	<b>sportsuit safari</b>
4G mini	<b>sportsuit santa</b>
4G	<b>sportsuit sleeve</b>
4G	<b>C.E.O. Classic</b> Classic, Elegant, One-of-a kind leather case for your iPod

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## iPodlounge Buyers' Guide 2004



**Above:**  
"Obsession" by Slavik Boyechko  
May 2004 iPodlounge  
"Me and My iPod" Contest Winner

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**ON THE COVER**  
The cover of the iPodlounge Buyers' Guide 2004 was drawn by contest winner Mark Kempken of Germany, who wins a pair of Ultimate Ears UE-10 Pro headphones (retail: \$900) for his submission. Congratulations!



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












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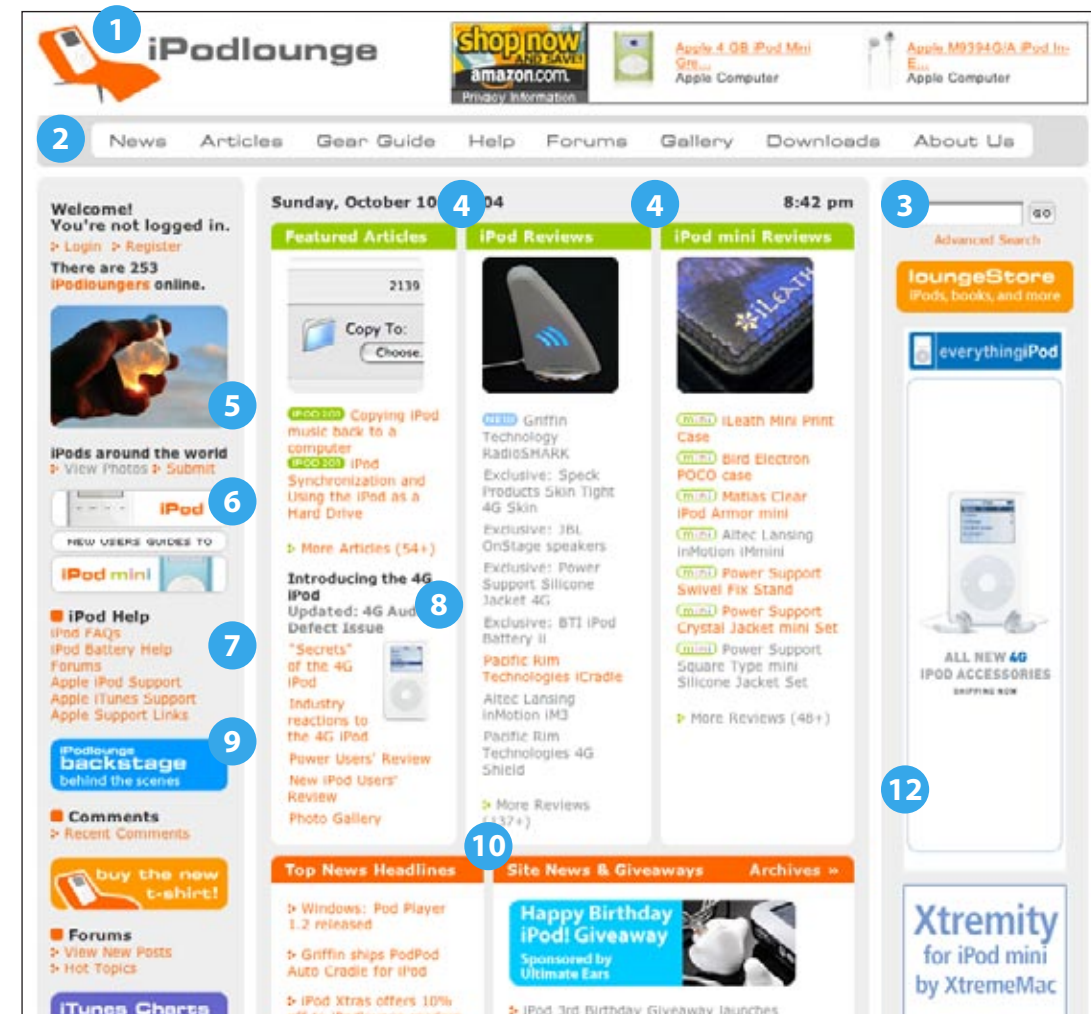
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Dennis Lloyd and Jeremy Horwitz  
for iPodlounge





## Meet the Editors.

One editorial, a team of Editors, and a lot to look forward to in the year ahead.

If iPodlounge's editorial staff had placed wagers on the events to come in 2004, no one would have put money on the introduction of four totally new iPods in just one year. But it happened. From the **iPod mini** (\$249) to the **fourth-generation iPod** (\$299 and up) to the black **iPod U2 Special Edition** (\$349) and **iPod Photo** (\$499 and up), Apple not only replaced the entire third-generation iPod lineup, but completely changed our conceptions of the iPod brand.

For now at least, the iPod mini has become Apple's entry level platform, smaller and lower in capacity than any other iPod. The fourth-generation iPod is now at the middle of the company's product line, with a \$299 entry price point and more than enough storage space for most users' music. iPod Photo devices are now Apple's premium iPods, equipped with color screens, better batteries, and the biggest hard drives - with the biggest prices (up to \$599). Finally, the Special Edition iPod - surely not just a one-time affair - represents a relatively inexpensive way to get an iPod that's collectible, physically special, and tied in with a band or similar partner. Widely respected in the music world and by millions of fans, U2 just happens to be an ideal starting point for that series.

Of course, the challenge for Apple has never been in appealing to the high-end of the market; rather, it's about winning over a notoriously price-sensitive mainstream audience while driving a stake through cheaper, inferior knockoffs. Several analysts claim that Apple is planning to address that need by introducing an even cheaper version of the iPod - call it the iPod Micro for lack of a better name - based on flash memory rather than a hard drive. And there have been persistent rumors since the introduction of the iPod mini that Apple planned a quick \$50 price drop by Summer 2004, to bring that hardware down to only \$199.

Instead, iPod sales have been astonishingly robust, and not only didn't Apple drop the iPod mini's price, but they neither increased its storage capacity nor even needed to push it heavily after its introduction. Domestic U.S. sellouts of the iPod mini were almost instant, based on word of mouth and building media buzz for the iPod platform. International sellouts rapidly followed when Apple had enough minis to ship to other countries.

It's not a complete surprise, then, that the Apple showed no fear in pushing an iPod Photo at the highest iPod price to date - \$599. Sure, Apple won't sell a billion at that price, but surely die-hards - like us - will buy them. That said, iPodlounge still believes that expansion of the iPod platform to its next stage of popularity will involve more affordable iPods, not more expensive ones. In early January of 2005, we'll see if Apple agrees with us.



**Dennis Lloyd**  
Publisher

A passionate, long-time lover of Apple products, **Dennis Lloyd** (dennisl@ipodlounge.com) was a graphic designer and DJ before creating iPodlounge. Dennis directs the site's news, forums, photo galleries, iPodlounge User Group, and general business affairs, which have grown under his watch to include over a million readers and numerous accolades. Happily married with zero children, one dog (Rocket the Wonderdog), one cat (Ferris), five iPods, and two turntables, he lives in and loves Irvine, California.



**Jeremy Horwitz**  
Senior Editor

**Jeremy Horwitz** (jeremy@ipodlounge.com) has written about electronic entertainment for publications ranging from Electronic Gaming Monthly to The New York Times, having founded and edited Ziff-Davis' Intelligent Gamer magazine. A cum laude graduate of Cornell Law School and author of the book Law School Insider, Jeremy presides over iPodlounge's editorial content, focusing special attention on new technologies and iPod reviews. He lives with girlfriend Heather and Siberian Husky Sake (Sah-kay) in Irvine, CA.

### Larry Angell

joined iPodlounge in 2004 to add additional iPod news coverage

to the site's main news page. He has written about Apple products for years at MacMinute.com, owned every generation of the iPod, and spends way too much money at the iTunes Music Store.



### Jerrod Hofferth

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## Breaking News

The latest updates on iPod hardware, accessories, and software, from iPodlounge.com's global news pages.



## Apple grows iPod family by three, sales by millions

**Surprise introduction of high-end iPod Photo accompanies launch of U2 iPod and dramatic sales announcement**

It was supposed to be a small day in iPod history - Apple was going to announce a partnership with U2 to promote the release of the band's new album, How to Dismantle an Atom Bomb, roll out a black version of the iPod, then hype the addition of a handful of countries to the iTunes Music Store.

But following the presentation of some impressive iPod sales statistics, showing an installed base of six million iPods as of the third quarter of 2004, Apple's presentation took a sharp and unexpected right turn into silliness. CEO Steve Jobs heralded the November release of iPod Socks (\$29.00), a three-pack of soft, brightly colored iPod carrying cases jokingly described as "revolutionary." Though Apple's audience at the California Theater in San Jose, CA laughed along with Jobs, they also began to suspect something big was coming.

Apple quickly shocked the crowd with the iPod Photo (\$499-\$599, see both of the Guide's next sections), an improved iteration of the fourth-generation iPod with a color screen, 15-hour battery life, and 40- or 60-Gigabytes of storage space. Capable of displaying digital photos and album artwork, the iPod Photo was already shipping to stores that day, Jobs said.

Though attendees enjoyed a live acoustic performance from U2's Bono and The Edge, the iPod U2 Special Edition (\$349, previewed next section) was comparatively unsurprising. Despite its uniquely shiny black front plate and band-engraved chrome rear, it is based only on the low-end, black-and-white 20GB iPod. Besides U2's engravings and an in-box \$50 coupon towards the purchase of a \$149 U2 Digital Box Set, its only attraction for buyers is a packed-in U2 poster.

### HP mixes iTunes, Windows XP Media Center OS

As the only Windows PC maker selling iPods, Hewlett Packard has introduced HP Tunes, a feature that permits iTunes playlists and songs to play back through PCs using Microsoft's Windows XP Media Center operating system. Media Center-equipped PCs can be remote controlled and used as center-pieces of home stereo setups, but as yet have not proved



popular by comparison with standard Windows XP-ready personal computers.

### Apple expands iTunes Music Store, renews iTunes

Coinciding with the launch of its new iPods, Apple expanded the iTunes Music Store across the European Union, opening local stores in Austria, Belgium, Finland, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal and Spain, each with €0.99 per song pricing. Apple also introduced iTunes 4.7, an upgraded version of its music software, discontinued support for prior versions, and promised



a November launch for a Canadian Music Store. An Irish launch was postponed.

**iPodlounge provides up-to-the-minute iPod news on its front page at [ipodlounge.com](http://ipodlounge.com), plus a complete archive of news stories dating back to the earliest days of the iPod (2001) at [ipodlounge.com/archives.php](http://ipodlounge.com/archives.php).**



# The iPodlounge Gear Guide

Start drooling now over these brand new products, but wait for our official reviews before you buy them.

## Apple Computer's iPod Photo



Photo Courtesy of Apple Computer



Long rumored, Apple's iPod Photo (40-Gigabytes, \$499; 60-Gigabytes, \$599) materialized as an iPod fan's dream - same footprint, more battery life (15 hours for music, up from 12 in current full-size iPods and 8 in older iPods), a color, higher-resolution screen (220 x 176 with 65,536 colors, up from 160 x 128 and 4 grays), plus video-out capability. Apple's created a new iPod interface with smoother fonts, cool colors, and more graphics to take advantage of the new screen.

But as its name implicitly suggests, there's no video: the iPod Photo stores digital photos and displays them either on its own screen or a TV (using AV cables and/or the new iPod Photo Dock, both included). More precisely, you need to use iTunes 4.7 to convert photos before the new iPod can display them, a possible no-no for serious photographers.

All the iPod Photo's new features come at some cost - not just the extra \$100 to \$200 you'll shell out over standard iPod prices. The iPod Photo is a wee bit thicker than an iPod (0.75" instead of the 40GB iPod's 0.69"), weighs 0.2 ounces more, takes an extra hour (five total) to recharge its battery, and since photos and audio share its memory, has slightly less audio skip protection (17 minutes versus 25) than before. They're trivial compromises given the iPod Photo's new capabilities, but worth noting. You can read our full review of the iPod Photo - with far greater detail - in the next section.

## Apple Computer's iPod U2 Special Edition

Until now, if you wanted a black iPod, you painted it yourself or paid ColorWare to do it. Now Apple's releasing the iPod U2 Special Edition (\$349), a.k.a. the U2 iPod, a black fourth-generation, 20-Gigabyte iPod with a red Click Wheel instead of the standard gray. Collectible if for no other reason than its unique color, the U2 iPod will hold additional appeal to fans of the rock group for which it is named: the signatures and names of U2's Bono, Larry Mullen, Adam Clayton and The Edge are

engraved on the back, along with a U2 logo and the phrase "iPod Special Edition." Other than its case, the U2 iPod is internally the same as any other 20-Gigabyte fourth-generation iPod, featuring a four-grayscale screen rather than a color one, and the thinnest full-sized iPod body to date. It also comes with a free U2 poster and a not-as-cool-as-it-sounds \$50 coupon towards the purchase of a U2 box set, as further explained below.



U2 iPod Photos Courtesy of Apple Computer

## How to Sell a Digital Box Set

Contrary to rumors that circulated on the Internet before the iPod U2 Special Edition was debuted, no music will be pre-loaded on the new device - not even the band's new album, How to Dismantle an Atom Bomb, which was originally believed to be a packed-in perk and the reason the unit wouldn't ship until mid-November. Instead, buyers will get a \$50 coupon (shown, bottom left) towards a new iTunes Digital Box Set titled The Complete U2 (\$149.00) with over 400 U2 tracks - every U2 album, plus rare and previously unreleased songs. Presumably Apple will offer more such box sets containing the backcatalogues of major artists, and perhaps additional Special Edition iPods to accompany them.



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## All New iPod Accessories



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# Speaker Systems

It's true that any set of speakers with an audio-in port can be used with the iPod, but a number of dedicated iPod speaker systems have proved better physical matches than the rest. Almost all are white in color, while only some include iPod charging docks, remote controls, and battery-operated portability. Here are several that we haven't reviewed yet.

## DLO iBoom

While the words "ghetto blaster" may have fallen out of use during the political correctness fad in the 1990's, the good old boom box never went out of style. iBoom (\$149.99) is the 21st Century white plastic evolution of that concept, docking an iPod inbetween four speakers, a digital FM radio, and a handle for "ease of portability." That's right; iBoom runs on six old-school D batteries (remember those?) or its included AC adapter, and may be an even more attractive portable solution than Altec's inMotions. We haven't tested the audio quality of iBoom yet, but DLO promises 20 watts per channel of power - enough volume potential for you to blast your music until someone calls the cops.



## JBL On Tour

We loved JBL's Creatures and liked On Stage, so why would we need On Tour (\$99)? Unlike its older siblings, On Tour is fully portable, highly sleek and stylish, and cheaper than Altec Lansing's inMotion series. Plus, if you

want to use them with a desktop or laptop, they're designed for that, too, and won't look awkward. Sound quality? Wait for our review.



## Bose SoundDock

The name Bose inspires strong reactions from different types of listeners, and the new SoundDock (\$299) won't end their debate: it's \$100 more expensive than its closest competitors (JBL's On Stage and Altec Lansing's inMotion iM3), physically larger (6.7"x11.9"x6.5"), and doesn't offer any specific feature they lack. It's also not portable - it runs only off AC power. But it has a built-in iPod dock, nice styling, and Bose's large fan base on its side. In our initial testing, its sound proved clean and more bass-rich than both On Stage and the iM3s, but we liked the balanced sound of On Stage. JBL's Creature IIs offer similar and perhaps better sound quality at a lower price. We'll have a full review soon.



# Power Sources

If Family Feud surveyed the top complaints about older iPods, battery issues would top the list. Thankfully virtually every iPod accessory maker has offered its own solution to that problem, in the form of a car charger, battery pack, or a similar-but-unique alternative. Having gone through two generations already, the latest crop of these products is far better than the last.

## Belkin's TuneBase

The car charger we most strongly prefer is Belkin's Auto Kit, and now the company's doing the concept twice better - for iPod minis, at least. The TuneBase (\$49.99) does what iPodlounge has been wanting for ages, combining an iPod cradle and charger with a gooseneck metal mounting tool. Insert TuneBase into your car's power outlet and position your iPod mini anywhere you desire - with a stylish, iPod-matching design. We haven't tested the TuneBase yet to ensure that it works as promised, but if it does, you can bet that we'll clamoring for a version compatible with full-sized iPods.



## NewerTech UHC Battery

If your vintage iPod (the ones without Dock Connectors) isn't holding a charge like it used to, NewerTech's Ultra-High Capacity (2100mAh) Replacement Lithium-Polymer Battery (\$39.99) will fire you up. Boasting 70% more power capacity than Apple's original iPod batteries, this replacement part requires you to pop open your iPod, and delivers up to 21 hours of playback. Dock Connector iPod owners are already salivating.



## Better Energy Solio

Which iPod charger would you want if you were trapped on a desert island? Probably Better Energy Systems' Solio (\$89.99). As the only solar-powered iPod charger available, Solio folds open and charges in 8-10 hours off of the sun (or 4 hours using AC power). Then you get 9 or more extra hours of playback from Dock Connector iPods. It also charges phones.



## Incase Charger

Known for iPod and iPod mini cases, Incase is branching out with this hybrid auto and home iPod charger (\$49.95), which works with both iPod and iPod mini hardware. Leave Apple's cables at home, and charge the iPod wherever you go.



## Tekkeon MyPower



As the first iPod accessory from Tekkeon, the MyPower MP1100 rechargeable battery pack and dock (\$89.95) promises 32 hours of added playback time for a fourth-generation iPod, and includes line-out, mini-USB and FireWire ports on its bottom. Four indicator lights let you know how much power remains in the battery, which clips on to the iPod like a sleeve.

## Belkin TunePower

There are two ways to boost your iPod's battery capacity: add a backpack, or replace the internal battery. Belkin's second-generation iPod backpack, called TunePower (\$99.99), adds 8-10 hours of juice to any Dock Connector-equipped iPod, and includes sleeves to fit 3G, 4G, and mini iPods. If the price seems steep compared to BTI's iPod Battery ii, remember, Belkin's web site sometimes offers 50% off sales.





# Cases

Since the inception of the iPod accessory market, the bread and butter of that market has been cases. Not surprisingly, iPodlounge has seen them all: silicone rubber, soft plastic, hard plastic, neoprene, standard fabric, custom fabric, metal, and composites thereof. As you'll note from the fact that these cases are at least partially derivative of ones we've reviewed before, There aren't many surprises left in the world of cases, but these are some of the new and interesting ones you can look forward to seeing soon.

## Tunewear ICEWEAR 4G

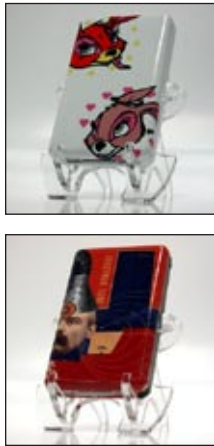


As the first offering from a new Japan-based accessory designer, the silicone rubber ICEWEAR for the iPod mini was impressive: icy clear with unique ribs on its edges. Now Tunewear has a similar design for the full-sized 4G iPod (~\$24.99). Two slits in the back let you use ICEWEAR on a belt, too. All that's missing is screen and Click Wheel protection.

## MacSkinz PodSkinz 4G



Plastic adhesive shells for the iPod aren't common, and MacSkinz has cornered the market. The company's newest PodSkinz (\$50/set) are limited editions, featuring highly detailed pieces of original artwork instead of the simple patterns that graced earlier versions.



## Marware mini Cases

You already knew the iPod mini was a "perfect stocking stuffer;" now Marware's providing the stockings. The Christmas-themed Santa case (\$19.95) complements two stylish new striped fabric mini cases, the sophisticated MetroVue (top, \$39.95 for a three-pack) and rugged-looking TrailVue (bottom, \$29.95). MetroVue and TrailVue feature clear plastic interiors for easy iPod mini viewing and use; Santa is a soft fabric sleeve.



## Tunewear PRIE Podwallet

After releasing the superb iPod mini-compatible PRIE cases, TuneWear decided to take the idea a step further with the PRIE Podwallet, a substantially larger leather 4G iPod case with room for iPod accessories, credit cards, and business cards. (The iPod's covered by a clear vinyl panel.) Like the other PRIE cases, the Podwallets are available in multiple (potentially confusing) versions - the A Type case is smaller (8.2" x 5.1" x

1.2"), while the B Type case is longer (8.9" x 5.1" x 1.2") and includes Super TUNEMAX, a 20-hour rechargeable battery. Meshed pockets, quality YKK zippers, and other little edges like a pen holder and cable winder round out both cases' internal features. If the Podwallet matches the superb build quality of its predecessor, it will be a winner, especially for those who like the two colors: black and hot pink.



## HP Printable Tattoos

Though Hewlett Packard originally planned to launch a distinctive blue-colored version of Apple's iPod, it ultimately stuck with the original and now iconic white and clear acrylic iPod casing. As an alternative for those who wanted more colorful iPods, HP debuted Printable Tattoos (\$14.99/10), adhesive iPod coverings that you can customize with art of your

choice or making using any printer - preferably one with colored ink. To support the release of the stickers, HP set up a gallery with musician-specific tattoos at hp.com/music, including artists from Gwen Stefani to Lloyd Banks and The Who. Since they fit any 4G iPod, the Printable Tattoos are one of the cheapest ways to fully customize the front of an iPod - except, and unfortunately, its four corners.



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## FrontField iPoDonuts

They protect the Scroll Wheels and Click Wheels of Dock Connector iPods. They glow in the dark. And they're not hard on the eyes. Japan-based FrontField's iPoDonuts (\$9.95 each, including shipping and a clear iPod screen protector) literally fill the holes left by many iPod cases, adding scratch protection to the two key elements of any iPod. They also provide a way for iPod purists to whitewash the gray Click Wheel of the 4G iPod.

## Stickers, Stickers, Stickers

More decorative than protective, and then more light scratch-protective than impact or knife-scratch protective, the newest group of iPod coverings looks as simple and low-tech as they come. But with smart use of residue-free adhesives and interesting new printing technologies, these stickers can add a little personal, guilt-free touch to an iPod without screwing up its polished casing forever.

## Power Support Wheel Film

We've already reviewed and liked Power Support's white and transparent Wheel Film for 3G and mini iPods. Now the company is releasing some of the most elaborate Click Wheel stickers available anywhere, featuring color patterns and artwork. Five Wheel Film stickers will come in each \$10 package; clear Film comes with Power Support's cases.

12

13



Etymotic 6i Isolators

For years, Etymotic has quietly produced some of history's best earphones, employing their expertise in hearing aid development to create incredibly accurate in-ear buds. iPodlounge has reviewed and loved the company's most expensive ER-4 series phones (\$330.00), and now Etymotic is releasing a cheaper pair specially designed to match the iPod. The 6i Isolators (\$149.00) include the obvious white cables and white flanges - those little rubber parts that fit in your ears - but use transparent

housings for their audio drivers. The result is only a step short of techno high fashion, and though the price tag will look steep to first-time high-end earphone buyers, Etymotic's results are generally spectacular, rendering sound considerably more crisply and distinctly than uninitiated users can imagine. The 6is include a great case, cleaning tool, and alternate flanges for a more customized fit.



Altec InMotion Headphones



Even though they fold closed in a vaguely yoyo-like way, their original name (OYOYO YO302WHT) sounded like a massive typographical error. But Altec Lansing wisely renamed them InMotion Headphones (\$35.00) in keeping with their other iPod audio offerings. Each set comes with a clear plastic case that holds the InMotions like sunglasses when folded. When you want to put them on, unfold the four sections, and their band will fall to the back of your neck as the earpieces slide over your ears. Sound quality? We haven't tested them yet, so we can't say. But they're cute, white, and won't break your bank account - a reasonable alternative if you don't like in-ear or pricey headphones.

Sony MDR-NX1

If the MDR-EX81 earphones (right) don't do it for you, Sony's MDR-NX1s (\$55.00) just might. Based on the same bass-heavy in-canal earphones used in Sony's low-end MDR-EX51s, the fashionable NX1s feature a neck strap rather than ear cords, but plastic earbuds might put off those who prefer rubber inserts (like us). Four colors are available. You'll only want the whites.



iPod-Matching Earphones

As with speakers, virtually any set of earphones will work with the iPod, but the demand for matching white cables has sparked a surprising number of companies to offer iPod-friendly products. Even Sony has gotten in on the racket with a low-end set of white earbuds, though the best of this bunch may well be from Etymotic, a company you've never heard of.

Sony MDR-EX81SL

Sony's low-end headphones have received plenty of positive attention from iPodlounge, and the company's new EX81s (\$59.00) will likely win some hearts, too. Having innovated the most comfortable in-ear rubber flange we've used, Sony's turned the earpieces upside down for over-the-ear insertion. They swivel to fit your ears, too.



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Global Source 9V Charger

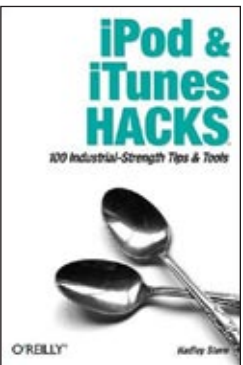
Granted, we might not be the target market for such a device, but Global Source's 9-Volt Emergency Charger (\$17.49) for Dock Connector iPods struck us as just a little odd. Maybe it was the screwdriver tip that's included for no apparent reason, or the odd transparent panel

with no logo or markings beneath. Or maybe it's that in 2004, you're way less likely to have a 9-volt than an iPod emergency. But if you had the battery, you could squeeze two extra hours of iPod power from it. Finally, we can reschedule that camping trip...



iPod & iTunes HACKS

Back before there was this thing called the Internet, most people used things called books to learn a lot about a specific subject. And some people still do. For them, Hadley Stern's iPod & iTunes HACKS (\$24.95) is a collection of "tips, tricks, and trade secrets for getting the very most from your iPod." And some of those tricks - including some legitimate software hacks - will actually surprise you.



Pyrim Rock Docks

Pyrim's Rock Docks (\$29.99-79.99) are stone-like desk mounts for iPods. Made from polished Dupont Corian, Rock Docks feature your choice of six stone finishes: red granite, quartz, sandstone, limestone, white stone, or granite.



Everything Else iPod

Though most iPod accessories fit into neat categories, the ones on this page just don't: they're some of the more unique offerings we've seen. iPod stands are - for the moment - a dying breed, replaced by Apple's official Docks, and only a few companies have been willing to take risks on iPod-related novelty electronics and books. That's sure to change, but for now, here are some of the more interesting and truly different items we've seen recently, in no particular order.

Griffin iBeam

When you purchased your iPod, you probably weren't thinking, "now if only I had laser pointer and flashlight attachments for this thing..." But if you had them, you know you'd be able to do something funny or useful with at least one of them. That's the appeal of Griffin's iBeam (\$19.99), and our dogs already love us for getting them.



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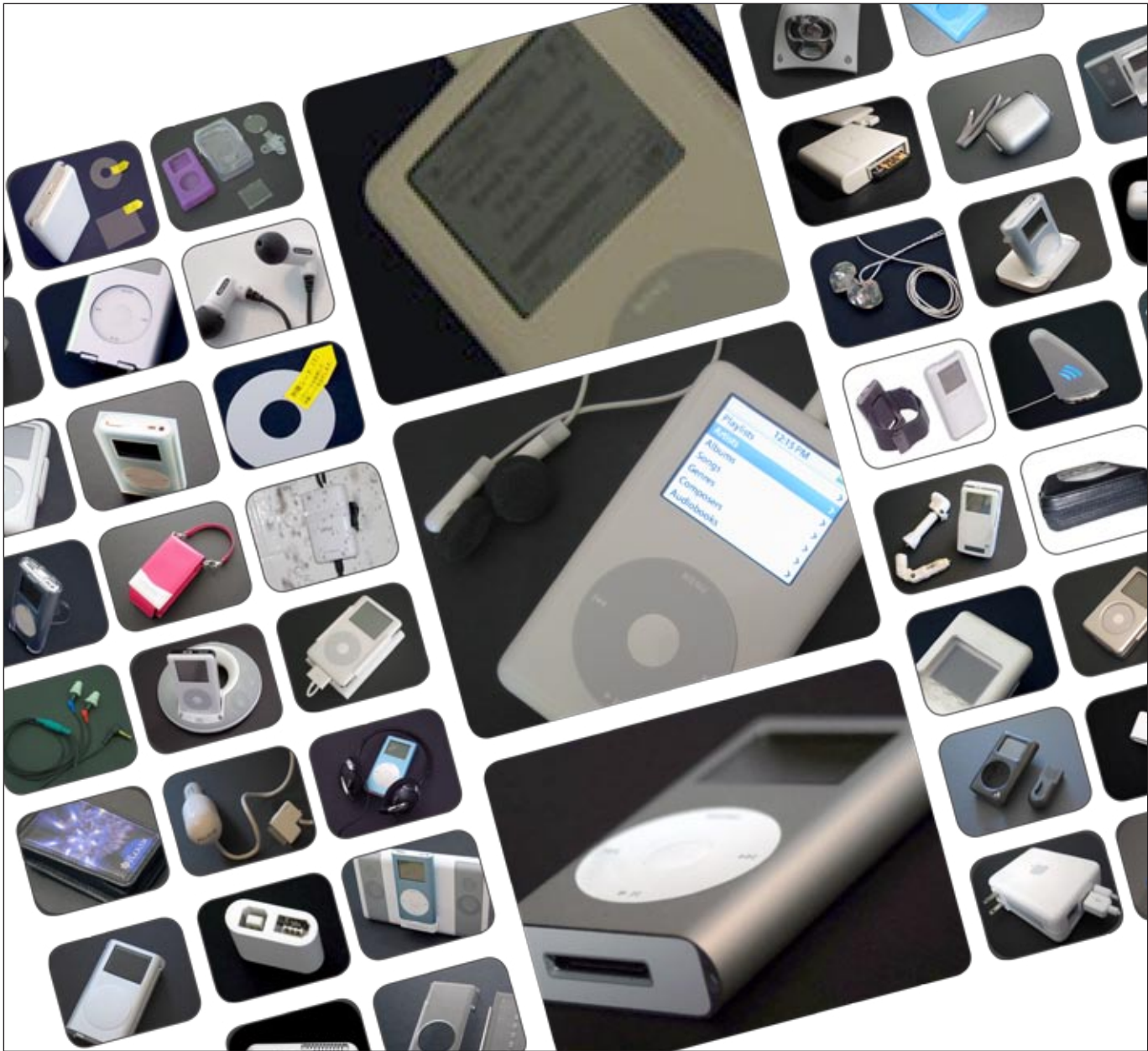
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# iPodlounge's Buyers' Guide 2004.

A definitive guide to the current-model iPods, accessories, and related products we have tested and recommended.



### How we grade

We fully explain our grading system at the end of this Guide, but here's a quick summary.



A grades are awarded only to Highly Recommended products, B grades to Recommended ones, and C to average ones. No D- or F-rated products are listed in the Buyers' Guide.

### What's inside the Guide

The Buyers' Guide includes five sections featuring the top iPods and accessories we've reviewed.

Pages 17-21	Picking Your iPod
Pages 22-33	The World's Best iPod Cases
Pages 34-39	Leading iPod Speakers and Headphones
Pages 40-43	Top iPod In-Car Accessories
Pages 44-47	The Best of the Other Accessories

# Picking your iPod.

Still trying to decide which iPod's right for your personal needs? iPodlounge can help.

If you're reading this Buyers' Guide, there's a good chance you have already acquired the iPod of your dreams. But if you're still on the fence or want your second iPod, this first section will help guide you in the right direction.

Three versions of the iPod are now in stores, the **iPod** (now on its fourth generation), the **iPod mini**, and the **iPod Photo**. Every iPod except the iPod mini uses a white acrylic front panel and a chrome metal back panel. The iPod Photo looks just like the iPod, but has a color screen and is slightly thicker than the thickest standard iPod - 0.06 of an inch. Apple's iPod mini is even tinier than the smallest full-sized iPod, and is available in five colors of anodized aluminum instead of plastic and shiny metal. Because they scratch less easily, are smaller, and slightly less expensive, iPod minis have proved very popular with female and younger buyers.

Aesthetics only tell part of the story. Most new iPod buyers are also concerned about the number of songs each iPod can hold, their batteries, pack-ins, and prices.

**Storage.** iPod minis hold around 1,000 songs (80 CDs), while the 60GB iPod Photo holds 15,000 songs (1,200 CDs). Since it's assumed that the average person owns 100 (or fewer) CDs, the 1,000 song iPod mini is a good first purchase. But serious music lovers should think bigger. Apple's 1,000 to 15,000 song estimates are based on medium-quality music recordings that sound great unless you have \$100+ headphones or connect your iPod to speakers. Higher-quality recordings consume 50% or more space than the estimates above. Also bear in mind that the larger iPods can also store digital photos, act as voice recorders, and more, reducing the iPod's music storage capacity. The iPod mini isn't the best choice for iPod users with expansionist fantasies; consider a larger iPod Photo.

**Batteries.** Every iPod includes a rechargeable battery which will last for 18-24 months (used normally) before replacement. Apple estimates that an iPod mini's battery will run for 8 hours before recharge, but we've seen 10-hour playback times. Similarly, the 20 and 40GB iPods promise 12 hours before recharge, but they can go for over 13. iPod Photos run for up to 17.

**Pack-ins.** The three models of iPod have the same core pack-ins: cables, power adapters, white ear buds and software. But from there, they diverge. Apple's iPod mini includes a simple belt clip not sold for any other iPod. The iPod 20GB includes nothing else, while the iPod 40GB includes a Dock (\$39.00) (described on the next page). Each iPod Photo unit includes Photo Cables and a Dock to permit TV viewing of digital photos, plus a soft carry bag and a fabric carry case. No iPod includes Apple's Remote (\$39) control.

**Screens.** As the table above indicates, each of the three iPod models has its own unique screen, and all are nicely backlit. The iPod mini's smaller black and white screen is easy to read so long as you don't have a serious visual impairment. While the full-sized iPod's 2" black and white screen is fine for even those with vision problems, the iPod Photo's 65,536 color screen is gorgeous, the best backlit of all, and even displays photos and art.



From left: Third-Generation (Discontinued) iPod, Fourth-Generation 20GB iPod, iPod Mini (Silver)

	iPod mini	iPod 4G (20GB)	iPod (4G) 40GB	iPod Photo 40GB	iPod Photo 60GB
Capacity (# Songs)	4GB (1,000)	20GB (5,000)	40GB (10,000)	40GB (10,000)	60GB (15,000)
Battery	8-10 Hours	12-13 Hours	12-13 Hours	15-17 Hours	15-17 Hours
Size & Weight	3.6"x2.0"x0.5" 3.6 oz	4.1"x2.4"x0.57" 5.6oz	4.1"x2.4"x0.69" 6.2oz	4.1"x2.4"x0.75" 6.4oz	4.1"x2.4"x0.75" 6.4oz
Screen	1.67" b/w	2" black/white	2" black/white	2" color	2" color
Colors & Materials	5 Aluminum	2 Acrylic+Metal	1 Acrylic+Metal	1 Acrylic+Metal	1 Acrylic+Metal
Key Pack-In	Belt Clip	None	Dock	Dock, Photo Cable, Cases	Dock, Photo Cable, Cases
Price	US\$249	US\$299	US\$399	US\$499	US\$599
iPodlounge Rating	B+	A-/B+	A-/B+	A-	A-

**Prices.** There's only a \$50 difference between the iPod mini and the smallest iPod, and iPodlounge strongly recommends that you spend the extra cash for 16-Gigabytes (4,000 songs) of additional storage and better battery life. Only buy the iPod mini if you love its small size. Similarly, the iPod Photo's only practical if you will use its photo or extra storage abilities. Though we love their screens, the iPod Photos sell for \$100-\$200 more than a 40-Gigabyte iPod - prices that will surely fall in the near future. Also note that Apple will sell a limited edition black-colored, 20-Gigabyte U2 iPod (\$349) later in November.

**Where to Buy.** iPod discounts aren't common, but recently online retailers such as Amazon.com and Buy.com have cut 10-15% off iPod and iPod mini retail prices. Hewlett-Packard's iPods, identical to Apple's, have seen some of the most aggressive discounting. Consider purchasing from a local retailer if you are concerned about having to return or replace your iPod.

**Other Notes.** Read iPodlounge.com's comprehensive reviews before you buy any iPod. Abbreviated versions appear next.



## Apple iPod (Fourth-Generation)



Judged in light of what came before, Apple's fourth-generation (4G) iPod is a fairly impressive piece of hardware. Modestly thinner than third-generation iPods (bottom photo), the 4G iPods (20-Gigabytes, \$299.00; 40-Gigabytes, \$399.00) include all of their predecessors' best features: the longer battery life of second-generation iPods, the sleeker curves, Dock Connector ports, and storage of third-generation iPods, plus the iPod mini's Click Wheel controls.

To a first time iPod buyer, then, the 4G iPod is virtually a no-lose proposition: you get the most intuitive and ingenious digital music control scheme yet devised, compatibility with an incredible array of accessories (including digital photo storage and voice recording tools), free best-of-class music organization and downloading software (iTunes), the ability to hold 5,000 or 10,000 songs at a competitive price, and entirely practical (if not class-leading) battery life. It doesn't hurt that the iPods have iconic white plastic and chrome bodies, and include nice earphones, USB and FireWire cables, and AC power chargers.

But the 4G iPod isn't perfect. Its purple-on-white screen is a small step down in looks and readability from its sharp black-on-white predecessor, and its core music features have barely changed in years. Apple claimed the 4G iPod's "shuffle songs" feature was an innovation, but instead of adding user-requested music features such as adjustable equalizers or full WMA support, Apple did little more than move their old random ("shuffle") playback feature to the main menu. Additionally, an audio defect affects some 4G iPod hardware, creating slight but audible sounds of static and hard drive noise in the earphones each time the iPod loads songs into its buffer. It doesn't affect every 4G iPod, but if you're concerned, check iPodlounge for more information.

Pricing for these iPods remains exclusive: even the lowest-cost 4G iPod still remains out of reach for a sizeable segment of the population. Apple touted lower prices at the 4G iPod's introduction, and though the price of a 20GB iPod did fall from the third-generation's \$399 to \$299, Apple stripped pack-ins from its box, dropping its remote control (\$39), Dock (\$39) and carrying case (\$39), while adding only a USB cable (\$19). Users got a net savings of \$2. Wow.

Other than these relatively small issues, it's hard to fault Apple for releasing a modestly improved version of the awesome 3G iPod. There may be numerous clones, but no other device touches the style, usability, and complete package offered by the iPod and iTunes. Any alternative is guaranteed to be mediocre.

The mantra governing iPodlounge's assignment of letter grade ratings to iPods and iPod accessories is "be fair, retrospective, and comparative." For new iPod users, we rate the 4G iPod an A- : while it possesses the traits of an A product, namely great design, nearly universal appeal, and good value for the dollar, it's not flawless. But experienced iPod users won't find it a dramatic evolution of the platform, and very serious music lovers like us will be concerned about its minor but annoying audio issues. That aside, we feel certain that new iPod owners will snap up virtually all that Apple can get in stores by year's end.

### Apple iPod Remote Get some distance from your iPod



There was a time when a separate review of the iPod's Remote (\$39.00) would not have been necessary for most new iPod buyers, but since Apple no longer includes this accessory with any iPod, we'll note our feelings here. The Remote is little more than a small cabled chrome and plastic remote control with five buttons (volume up/down, track forward/reverse, and play/pause) that - surprise - control the iPod. On the back of the Remote is a large plastic pinching clip that easily attaches to a shirt or jacket. In our experience, the plastic parts have a tendency to develop surface cracks over time when exposed to moderate heat (inside a car, for example), and the practical utility of the remote is limited except under rare circumstances. There's no denying that the Remote is radically overpriced, even though it includes an extra pair of the iPod's pack-in buds. Apple really needs an LCD screen-equipped remote, like those of its competitors, and a better price for this one.

## Apple iPod mini



Given that its four-Gigabyte, 1,000-song storage capacity is one-fifth that of the least expensive full-sized iPod, the iPod mini (\$249.00) initially stuck many (including iPodlounge) as a poor value relative to Apple's other music players. And it is in fact the lowest-capacity iPod ever introduced. But consumers were won over more dramatically by the mini's unique design than Apple or its critics could have anticipated. Almost from its first day of availability, the iPod mini has sold out wherever it's been available, both domestically and internationally. It helps that it's currently Apple's most affordable iPod, even if it's not the most fully featured.

Storage capacity aside, the iPod mini was the first Apple product to introduce the Click Wheel, a brilliant combination of the earlier iPods' touch-sensitive Scroll Wheel with four depressable buttons on its north, south, west and east sides. As the smallest iPod released to date - roughly the dimensions of a business card, but with the thickness of a candy bar - it is even easier to toss into a purse or pocket than a thin full-sized iPod. And its freckled, anodized aluminum casing is infintely less scratchable than the polished acrylic and metal surfaces of larger iPods. Its size, resilience, and ever-easier-than-iPod control system makes the iPod mini an ideal exercise companion and starter iPod for first-time digital music collectors.

A few other factors don't hurt its appeal, either. Apple released the iPod mini in five colors - silver, gold, blue, pink, and green - each with its own fashion and demographic appeal. Better yet, the mini is almost completely compatible with existing Dock Connector and top-mounting iPod accessories, including some that work though they're not officially supposed to. Support from Apple's third-party developers has been strong; new mini-specific cases and electronics have flourished, with Altec Lansing's inMotion iMmini speakers even outperforming their fulf-sized iPod cohorts in our testing. And it goes without saying that the iPod mini includes and works with Apple's iTunes.

The mini does compromise the full-sized iPod experience in a few ways, however, leaving aside the obvious storage difference. Its screen is a bit smaller, and though Apple partially compensated by using a more readable small font, it displays one less line of text than the iPod. On a related note, its built-in games, particularly Solitaire, aren't as easy to see as on the larger iPod's screen, though they're playable. And unlike the newest 4G iPod's 12-hour battery, the mini's is only rated for 8 (rechargeable), though it lasted up to 10 in our tests.

These are minor points; our only real concern about the mini remains its value, and despite its success, we still think the full-sized iPods are better buys. But like the full-sized iPod, the iPod mini offers consumers a complete package - everything you need, from hardware to cables, headphones, and great software, is included in the box. For a small package with limited storage capacity, it's about as beautifully designed as it could get. Assuming you can find one in a store, you'll love it until it dies.

### Apple iPod Dock Make your iPod stand up and talk from its bottom

Before the introduction of the iPod Photo, Apple included an iPod Dock with its two highest-end iPods. Now the audio Dock comes only with Apple's 40-Gigabyte iPod, and is sold separately for the 20-Gigabyte iPod and the iPod mini (\$39.00). (A Photo Dock comes with every iPod Photo.) The white plastic audio Dock enables the iPod to stand up on its bottom edge - "gently recline" might be a more accurate description - and display its screen in a natural position while charging, connecting to a computer, and/or playing audio. Each Dock uses a gray rubber pad to grip a flat surface, and includes a line-out port that pulls the cleanest possible signal from the connected iPod; the latter feature makes additional Docks worthwhile attachments to your home stereo system(s). Pacific Rim Technologies sells a cheaper and somewhat cheaper-looking alternative called the iCradle (\$28.99), while SendStation's PocketDocks (\$18.95 to \$29.95) are similar but substantially smaller Dock replacements.



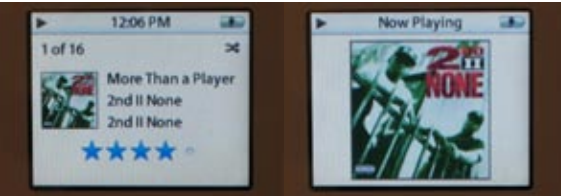


# Apple iPod Photo (40/60-Gigabyte)



A-

## Enhanced user interface



The iPod Photo's new user interface isn't a radical icon-based redesign of the old iPod menus. Instead, it adds splashes of color, a classier font (Myriad), and Mac OS X Aqua-inspired liquid scroll bars and progress indicators to the familiar text-based iPod interface. Apple's use of a higher resolution screen (220 x 176 with 65,536 colors, up from 160 x 128 and 4 grays) adds more detail and crispness to every menu. When you play back any song with album art stored in iTunes - included with every Music Store download - the cover appears on the iPod's screen during playback as an icon. Press the center button to enlarge the art on the screen; additional presses move you through place-in-song skipping and rating screens.

It's hard not to love Apple's iPod Photo (\$499, 40-Gigabytes; \$599, 60-Gigabytes) at first sight. With a new color interface, over fifteen hours of battery life, up to 15,000 songs of storage space and cool new pack-ins, the latest iPod represents the future of the brand and the embodiment of many fans' dreams. But in an uncharacteristic break from Apple's track record, the iPod Photo hardware and software have some rough edges that will put off some potential buyers. For a company increasingly attentive to the mainstream, the new iPod is unquestionably a classic early adopter's product - for now.

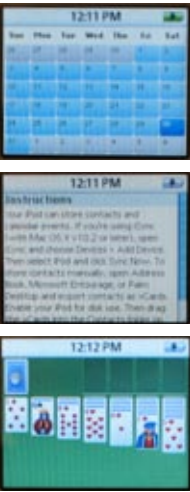
The iPod Photo's positives are obvious. While preserving all the music functions we enjoyed in the 4G iPod, and maintaining a virtually identical casing - only a millimeter thicker, and a mere 0.2 oz. heavier than a 40GB model - it evolves the user interface with color and graphics (below, left), adds photo display abilities (next page), and includes enhanced versions of the iPod's applications (below).

But a simple recitation of features ignores how impressively executed most of them are. By iPod standards, the new transfective color screen is gorgeous, with bright colors and a strong backlight that keeps the screen evenly illuminated. It's two steps better than the quality black-and-white screens used in last year's third-generation iPods, but four steps above the less impressive purple-and-white fourth-generation iPod screens. Apple's new color user interface is similarly a big, if evolutionary, step forward from iPods released only four months ago; prior iPod owners will be envious within seconds of seeing it, and we're pretty sure it will be a standard iPod feature two years from now.

The new unit's battery is another major plus, even if it modestly thickens the iPod Photo's case. Even those who don't care about photos will love the extra music playback - our first music-only test lasted 17 hours, six minutes, seriously trumping Apple's estimate, and iPod batteries often improve in later tests. Though the Photo's slideshow display ability (see next page) is a comparatively modest 5-plus hours, that's more than enough for most photo presentations, or using the battery-draining accessories you'll need for photo transfers.

Except for the iPod Photo's inability to fit in speaker systems with integrated docks, our only issues with the iPod Photo's music abilities carry over from the 4G iPod. While we strongly emphasize that we love listening to music on the iPod Photo, and that it's an A-caliber product in that regard, the product has not taken any steps forward in user-requested features such as adjustable equalizers or support for other file formats. Album art displays would likely have been far down the list. And we heard the same audio defect mentioned in our 4G iPod review when testing the iPod Photo, only a fair bit quieter. It's aggravating in a \$299 iPod, let alone a \$599 one, and still needs to be fixed.

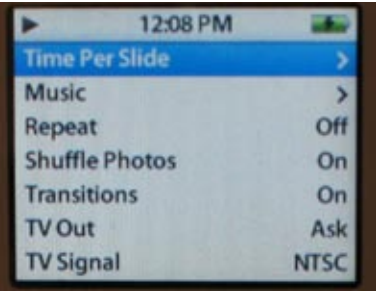
## Familiar applications, new look



We'll admit that we play Solitaire on any iPod we're carrying, and if you're somewhat like us, you've used at least one of Apple's free games or applications - Calendar, Clock, Contacts, Notes, Brick, Music Quiz, Parachute and Solitaire. Each has received a more than pleasant color and resolution facelift for the iPod Photo, with Calendar and Solitaire looking the best of all. Functionality wise, you'd be hard-pressed to find major differences between these and their older iPod equivalents, but the new screen does hold more text for Notes and Calendar entries and display everything just a bit more clearly. And Apple modestly changed the rotation controls on Solitaire - not for the better, in our view. We continue to hope that the company expands the suite of built-in programs; a color visualizer and/or screensavers to go along with music playback would be especially welcome.

# And it plays back all your photos

Apple has music playback down to a virtual science on the iPod, but it's a relative newcomer to the portable photo storage and playback market. Unfortunately, this inexperience shows a bit in the iPod Photo, which - at least for the moment - suffers from some small software and hardware limitations.



The iPod Photo's good points are numerous. Once you've transferred your photos on to the device, you can create sequential "slideshows" that display either on the device's screen or your TV. Slideshows can be silent or accompanied by your choice of music, and transition from shot to shot with smooth Star Wars movie-style wipes. If displayed on the iPod, the pictures take up the full screen, but if you're using a TV, the iPod becomes a remote control with the prior, current and next pictures. In either case, the iPod's forward button skips forward a photo, reverse goes back a photo, play and pause and menu... you know. Play and pause icons appear on-screen in Mac OS X beveled form.



If you just want to view photos individually, the iPod Photo stacks 25 thumbnails to a page, and you scroll through by touching the Click Wheel. Despite their small size and our concern that they'd be hard to discern from one another, the photos are impressively identifiable. Scrolling through photos is a little too fast, but otherwise fine; we'll hope for a tweak in future firmware.

Pictures look very good, but not spectacular on the iPod Photo's screen, which is around half the resolution (38,720 pixels) of screens commonly used in low-end digital cameras (78,000) and a third of mid-range ones (118,000). Images are more than acceptable on the small screen and on TV, but aren't stunning.

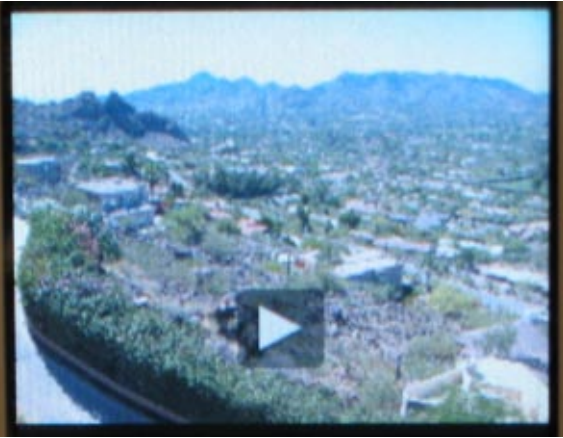
Some will gripe about the iPod Photo's inability to transfer photos off of either cameras or memory cards without the use of additional accessories. We agree. Apple and Belkin have had a year to improve on their co-developed Media Reader and Digital Camera Link accessories (see our reviews), and though these devices do an acceptable job of transferring photos from cameras and memory cards to iPods, they've been pooh-pooed by serious photographers for slow speeds and iPod lovers for their battery drain. One of these accessories, or something better, should have been in the iPod Photo box.

The other big issue: the iPod Photo currently needs a computer to pre-process any picture before it appears on screen, and though Apple inexplicably uses iTunes to handle the photo processing, it's slow, non-iconic, and less intuitive than you'd imagine. We needed the manual to find the photo transfer button, which is hidden in an iTunes options menu. iTunes also failed to recognize our iPod Photo as such until we restarted our Mac. And the (admittedly one-time-only) 90 minute optimization time for a 2,500-photo collection was painful. Expect three times the wait on a PC. Worse yet, photos transferred to the iPod using Belkin's accessories won't display until run through iTunes. Ugh.

There's little doubt once you've used the iPod Photo that its new screen and interface will be in virtually every full-sized iPod Apple sells two or three years from now, and by that standard, it's an important product. Admittedly, its limitations, combined with sticker shock over the 60GB version's price, may put some buyers off. But the 40GB version is a major step over last year's \$499 model, and a great value given all of its pack ins - Apple's best iPod this year.

# New Photo Dock and iPod AV Cable

In addition to a carrying case, soft carry bag, data cables and a power supply, two new pack-ins come in every iPod Photo box. First is the Photo Dock, which looks just like Apple's audio Dock but contains a S-Video port on its right rear side. S-Video input permits a TV to display cleaner video than is possible with a standard yellow-tipped RCA "composite" video port. No S-Video cable is included in the package, however. Instead, Apple includes a long, white AV cable that plugs into the iPod Photo's headphone jack (!) and outputs both audio and composite video to any television. The cable looks cool, and works well (see TV photo below).





**The World's Best iPod Cases.** From rubber to metal, these cases are iPodlounge's top picks for 3G, 4G and mini iPods.

**Silicone Rubber Cases.** Practical and inexpensive, these cases protect your iPod from scratches without adding excess thickness or weight.



**Lajo eXoFLP for 3G iPods**

One of the most practical silicone rubber case designs we've ever reviewed is a product from China-based manufacturer Lajo. The eXoFLP (\$21.50) is just one of a confusingly huge variety of cases sold by Lajo, but has the best features of the rest: great overall protection, thin rubber coverage for the iPod's controls, and a flip-open bottom panel to protect the iPod's Dock Connector port. And it's available in a huge variety of colors, including glow-in-the-dark, pearlescent, transparent, and opaque shades. The iPod mini version, eXoFLPmini, is equally excellent and virtually identical. All that's missing from the eXoFLP design is integrated iPod screen protection and a packed-in belt clip, both of which Lajo sells separately at reasonable prices. Beware, though: like the company's huge lineup of cases, its web site ([www.lajo.biz](http://www.lajo.biz)) is more than a bit confusing.. You won't find the cases in most stores, either.

**Power Support Silicone Jacket 4G**



There aren't many rubber cases available yet for Apple's fourth-generation iPod, but the best we've tested so far is Power Support's Silicone Jacket Set (\$29.00). Simple in execution, the set is the only one we've used that includes adequate protection for the 4G iPod's body, screen, and controls, thanks to included clear adhesive film that helps to

protect all the iPod's surfaces. A thin hole is left at the top of the case to permit attachment of top-mounting iPod accessories such as Griffin's iTrip and iTalk. Separate versions for 20 and 40GB iPods let you guarantee a proper fit - which is missing from some competitors. More colors would help, and we expect Lajo will eventually offer better, but today, this is a great alternative.

**iSkin eVo 2 for 4G iPods**



Canada-based iSkin has made some of the best cases for each generation of iPod, and its eVo 2 case (\$29.99) is no exception. Covering most of the iPod with silicone rubber and using a nice hard plastic screen protector, the eVo 2 does good job of protecting the 4G iPod. There's also a unique thin top surface to let you use top-mounting accessories without opening the case. Like Lajo, iSkin offers a variety

of colors - though not quite as many - and like Power Support, iSkin gives you more than just a rubber case for the price you pay. But the eVo 2's belt clip isn't that great, the packed-in clear soft plastic case isn't too useful, and there's no protection for the iPod's controls. Compared with products we don't recommend here, eVo 2 is fantastic, but an eVo 3 still could improve further.

There's an old saying - "rules are made to be broken" - that gets a bad rap because so few people break the right rules in the right ways. The Square Type Silicone Jacket Set (\$22.00) from Power Support is one of the rare positive exceptions, breaking an iPod case design rule ("make it match the iPod's curves") with a unique approach that works visually and practically.

Square Type stands apart from myriad competitors because of its shape: using square edges, the case is a perfectly rectangular rubber box, a perversion of the iPod's soft curves that frankly we could not have imagined would look so good. It's like a small block of frosted ice, turning the iPod mini's metal edges into almost prismatic shades of color, an undeniably cool effect in person. Rubber square edges also just happen to add several extra millimeters of thickness at points to the case's anti-shock ability.

Each Square Type set from Power Support includes three pieces: the silicone rubber case, one transparent screen protector called Crystal Film, and one transparent Click Wheel protector called Wheel Film. Together, these three parts cover the entire iPod mini save its top, Dock Connector port, and Action Button, which is nearly the maximum amount of protection we've seen in an iPod mini rubber case. Only the top is left fully exposed.

However, a millimeter or two of rubber lip separates that top edge of the case from the mini, so even if the Square Type-encased mini were dropped on its top, the case would absorb the blow. And the mini doesn't fall out of the case when it's turned upside down - mostly because of the extra gripping strength of the Square Type's edges. This lip turns out to be as good of a solution as we've seen for providing both true top-mounting accessory access and adequate protection. Scratching of the top is our only remaining concern.

Dock Connector exposure is relatively minimal: the hole is just large enough for Apple and Belkin accessory cables, thus proving perfect for our in-home and in-car purposes, and good for most of the accessories we would advise attaching to any iPod mini. Something a little bigger wouldn't have hurt.

Given its price and appearance, we don't hesitate to highly recommend this protective and seriously interesting case design to any iPod user. With so many boring iPod mini case clones in the marketplace, Power Support deserves special kudos for taking a risk on something new and executing so perfectly.

**Different advantages: eXoFLPmini and iSkin mini**

Before the Square Type case came along, our two top iPod mini cases were Lajo's oddly-named eXoFLP-mini (\$21.50) and the iSkin mini (\$24.99) case, though each offered different advantages. eXoFLPmini fully covers the entire iPod save its screen, and has a pop-open bottom. It's the only iPod mini case with integrated rubber protection for the Click Wheel, though Power Support's case includes film to achieve the same purpose. iSkin mini, by comparison, has no Click

Wheel protection, but has a special thin rubber membrane at its top that easily permits some top-mounted accessories (not the iTrip mini) to be connected without sacrificing any protectiveness, plus includes a belt clip. And like Power Support, iSkin includes a screen protector - Lajo makes you buy one separately, but has a lower price to compensate. You can decide which features suit you better. We give the slight edge to Lajo here, but think that iSkin's case is great, too.

**Power Support Mini Square Type Jacket**



A eXoFLPmini



A- iSkin mini



**Leather Cases.** Less resilient than rubber, leather looks classier, but is often more expensive. Our mid-range and high-end leather case picks follow.

## Marware C.E.O. Glove 3G



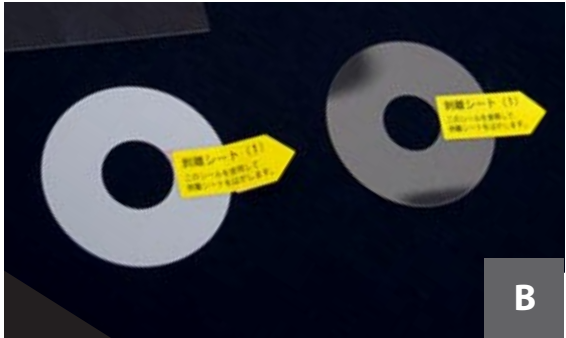
Though Vaja dominates the market for high-end, high-priced leather cases, our favorite leather case for the average 3G iPod user is Marware's C.E.O. Glove (\$27.95), a slim, smart design that does away with the flap-and-snap PDA case trappings of its competitors, yet manages to look at least as professional. To put our feelings in perspective, we've used and really liked leather PDA cases before, including Vaja's high-end Argentinian designs, but we always have a hard time seeing the iPod wrapped up in something with a big front flap that holds business cards and adds so much thickness.

Marware's C.E.O. Glove eliminates these issues entirely. Though its black leather won't be confused with the thicker stock used by Vaja, the stitching, design and overall synthesis of materials distinguishes the C.E.O. from cheap leather goods like typical cell phone cases. Made in two sizes to fit thicker and thinner 3G iPods, the Glove case includes an ear-to-ear zipper that opens to neatly slip the iPod inside. Inserting and removing the iPod is exceedingly easy, and the zipper's inside path is covered by fabric to prevent iPod scratching. Marware's fit and finish are handsome, and generally protective. Transparent plastic shields the screen and the residual parts of the iPod's front.

Unlike silicone rubber cases such as Lajo's eXo2, the C.E.O. Glove doesn't cover the iPod's buttons or Scroll Wheel, but this won't be a problem unless you keep both your keys and iPod in your pocket. Another minor issue is that the Glove leaves the headphone port and hold switch open with slightly unflattering rectangular boxes that look to be hand-cut. We could imagine ways they could look better, but it's only a minor defect, especially considering that the C.E.O. Glove is one of the only cases we've found to pass one of our pet peeve tests: you don't need to remove the case to use the iPod with either Dock Connector or headphone port accessories. From iTrip to NaviPod remote control to Belkin Voice Recorder, accessories fit on top without a problem, and the zipper design lets you easily expose the bottom of the iPod to Apple's Dock or to in-car accessories. You mightn't know how aggravating the alternative can be, so Marware scored big points from us for this.

Our only complaint is actually mixed praise: Marware includes an impressively strong belt clip that initially seems to snap so firmly on to the Glove that we at first had trouble removing the clip, and nicked ourselves putting it on. But it turns out that the clip rides on rails, and easily detaches with a button press - you'll need to use a pen to do that, though. Good thing; you won't want to keep the C.E.O. Glove on your belt. A case this slim can and does go into the pocket, and it looks pretty cool when it comes out, too.

### Cover your Scroll Wheel, thanks to **Power Support's Wheel Film**



Wheel protection is the one feature most frequently missing from leather iPod cases. Consider Power Support's Wheel Film, now available in three different sizes (3G, 4G, and mini) and multiple colors, some with printed images. While pricey at \$6.50 for a two-pack or \$10 for a five-pack with sort of goofy designs (including a roulette wheel), the Wheel Film definitely protects your iPod's wheel against scratches. You mightn't even notice the Film is on your iPod, especially if you use the transparent Film, which is only available for the 4G and mini iPods. We also found that the transparent 4G and mini Film was considerably easier to remove from those units than the 3G's matte white Wheel Film. Is it reusable? Expect each one to last until you peel it off.

PDA case vendor Sena's new iPod mini Detachable Flip Cover Cases (\$29.99) are an interesting leather evolution of the two-piece Convertible case design we liked from Marware. Adding little bulk to the iPod mini's body, the first piece of the Sena cases covers most of the front, back, bottom and sides of the mini, leaving only the screen, Click Wheel, top and finger-grip sized holes on the sides exposed. There's no padding in the shell of the case, and only modest hard reinforcement for the front and back leather pieces. A smaller than normal Dock Connector hole at the bottom may pose a small challenge to use with other than official Apple parts, but is fine for typical users' needs.

Sena's second leather part, called a Flip Cover, attaches to the inside top back flap of the first piece with a strip of Velcro. The Flip Cover is nothing but a reinforced semi-hard leather panel with a top hole for the headphone jack and two small interior magnets that attach to similar magnets in the front of the case. Though they protrude a bit from the case surfaces, the magnets do work quite well to keep the case closed, and both a small embossed Sena logo and a thin sheet of padding give the cover a little extra front-side refinement. Together, the two pieces provide almost complete iPod mini protection, with the side benefit of being separable whenever you desire. It's a smart design, if more than somewhat familiar.

On one hand, Sena's web site doesn't do justice to the cases: they certainly look better in person, primarily because their colors are actually more subtle, traditional matches for existing women's fashion accessories. The "red" case for example is actually apple red, while the "yellow" case is actually closer to mustard - the color, not the condiment. On the other hand, the leather, fit and finish look pretty good but not quite up to Vaja's gold standards, though there is a fair price difference between the options.

The Sena iPod mini Case is well-designed and nice to look at. We have no problem recommending it to those who like mid-grade leather cases, especially ones in colors that match other fashion accessories.

## Global Source **Deluxe Leather Case**

Global Source's first iPod mini product is somewhat mislabeled: called the Deluxe Leather Case, the black leather case actually is a middle-of-road product rather than a premium one. While competitively priced at \$27.99, it lacks some of the finer fit and finish of Vaja's more expensive and competing Classic mini case, yet is a good enough product to stand on its own.

Flip-front iPod cases aren't our favorite designs, but Global Source's design is pretty good for the genre. It includes a flip-open front panel that shields an iPod mini from scratches and light impacts, covers its Dock Connector port, and always exposes its headphone jack. When closed, the iPod is amply protected, but when open, there's no screen or Wheel protection. There's also a detachable belt clip and removable brass nub, plus a magnetic lid lock. Overall, the case is very protective, and is decently finished.

Because the lid opens from the bottom rather than the top, when the Deluxe Leather Case is mounted on a belt and unlatched, the iPod mini hangs upside down in its enclosure - a better viewing angle for the belt user, but not for those who use their iPod minis primarily in vehicles. To expose the Dock Connector port, you must keep the lid entirely open to plug anything into the iPod's bottom. For some users, this will be a trivial point, but having to keep Global Source's case splayed out in a car may bother others.

We continue to prefer Vaja's iPod mini overall, but as low-priced options go, the Deluxe Leather Case is a good value. Belt clip users will especially love it.

## Sena **Detachable Flip Cover Case**





# Tunewear Prie Classic Face Case



Though iPodlounge has seen its fair share of attempts at unisex and feminine cases, relatively new iPod accessory maker Tunewear is the first to completely nail a classy female-specific design: the company's new leather Prie Classic Face case has the same je ne sais quois indicia of quality that has previously separated Vaja cases from all others, but in a distinctly feminine package that likely will do for women what Vaja's sculpted cases have done for men.

There are actually four versions of the Prie case, differing only in their included hand straps and interior iPod mini face protection. Each Prie is a traditional PDA case-style rectangular box with an opening front flap that reveals the iPod mini's face. The front flap includes a small interior slot large enough for a credit card, and a Velcro pad that holds the case closed at the iPod mini's Dock Connector port. At the flap's bottom is a second piece of leather in a soft U shape, tastefully embossed with Tunewear's logo.

Differences appear when the Pries are opened. Tunewear's "Classic Face" design covers more of the iPod, while the "Open Face" design exposes almost its entire front. Similarly, TuneWear offers two different sets of packed-in straps (the depicted set, more female and purse-like, with another set more unisex), and four colors that may appeal more to women than men.

Tunewear's most interesting design choice was to pick expensive-looking stitching, clasps and eyelets for the Prie cases: a short strap includes lobster claw clasps, hooks into polished metallic rectangular eyelets in the Prie case, and its combined stitching and material look every bit as good as what you'd see at a luxury leather goods store. The long strap is even more impressive, a legitimately long piece of leather with larger, quality clasps at its ends and the ability to adjust its length to whatever you desire. Though the meat of the Prie case is impressive, it's these straps that give the product extra A-caliber class, and feminine emphasis regardless of color.

Multiple viewers offered uniformly positive impressions of Prie. The quality of Tunewear's leather is certainly higher than that of most leather cases, and is instantly apparent as excellent from the moment the Prie is removed from its packaging. Stitching at all points on the case is precise and meticulous in a way we rarely see in less expensive cases, and each edge of the Prie appears to have been given equally strong attention to detail.

If the case has any issues, they're likely from Tunewear's dainty design consistency. The headphone port hole, precision fit to Apple's remote control connector footprint and even professionally stitched around, won't accommodate larger headphone plugs found on expensive headphones. And the Dock Connector hole is also very small, with too little space on its left and right sides to attach most peripherals while the iPod mini's inside.

Our final concern is Prie's price. The cases sell for a bit more than Vaja's iPod mini Classic case (\$34.90 and up), but less than its \$50-\$70 iVod mini. For men, Vaja's cases are better options, but women will eat Prie up. Without question, it would be our top pick as a gift for that special iPod-loving lady.

## iLeath Mini Print Case Make your own iPod case - at least, the front panel



Though it won't win awards for its leather quality, the Mini Print Case from iLeath (\$44.99) does offer a feature not found in any other case - a fully customizable front flap. You visit iLeath's web site, upload a digital photo or piece of art, and it appears on the case as a taut leather patch that's water-resistant and pretty close in color to what you submitted. iLeath also offers uncustomized versions of the Mini Print Case at lower prices, and includes an unremarkable integrated belt clip with each one. Overall, though this product offers decent protection for your iPod mini, the custom look is more of a hook.

# Vaja iVod 3G



On rare occasion, iPodlounge comes across an accessory so well made that the manufacturer could charge pretty much any price and still sell out. Argentinian leather manufacturer Vaja makes several such accessories, two of which are on this page, and even their packaging scores points on class.

The iVod 3G case (\$65.90) is what a high-end leather iPod case should look like: using a semi-puffed leather exterior, its seams are neatly tucked away like a fine upholstered piece of furniture. A bonded leather process combines with a single piece of clear, semi-hard vinyl to create a practical shield for the 3G iPod's front, improving on Vaja's earlier iPod designs and beautifully displaying the treasure inside the case. The back of the iVod has a metal post for attaching an industry standard swivel belt clip, though you can also order the case without a belt clip, further streamlining its body and reducing its thickness. We'd take it without the clip.

Like most sleeve case designs, the iVod has you slip the iPod in through the top, and thereafter, access to all of the iPod's controls is a finger tip away. Vaja's puffed exterior is soft to the touch, while the rigid interior provides stiff protection against mishaps. Although the top corners are not covered by the case, this was an intentional "form follows function" design choice, making it far easier to pull the iPod out of its well fitting, snug-but-not-tight leather home.

Some may balk at the iVod's price, but the difference between this case and its closest competition - even cases released a year later - is profound. From moment one, it's apparent that the iVod is well-made, and that there's something special about the quality of the Argentine leather. Open the black glossy and matte-printed box - which is itself beautifully designed - and your room quickly fills with that real quality leather smell. To add further value to the product, Vaja offers customized iVods for those who want their names engraved or one of many leather and color combinations not offered in the standard model. Each case includes a plastic individualized warranty card, too.

A 4G version of this case, iVod Remixed is available now. We expect that it will be every bit as good as Vaja's other products.

## Vaja iVod mini

We loved the iVod, and felt quite the same about Vaja's iVod mini (\$49.90 - \$69.90). The soft, semi-puffed leather case covers all of the mini's corners properly, providing two millimeters of impact resistance on all sides. A high-class sewn black fabric interior grips the mini without scratching it, and the built-in hard screen protector looks and works great. Best yet, Vaja now impressively offers at least 28 different colors for buyers to choose from - everything from white to gray to black, red to green to blue, many colors in multiple shades., plus low-cost engraving or embossing of any logo.

The only design issue buyers may have is that the case doesn't cover the iPod mini's Click Wheel, top or bottom. Instead, the top is entirely exposed as a place for the iPod to slip in, the bottom provides substantially open access to the Dock Connector port, and the Click Wheel is left fully accessible.

We didn't mind the exposed top and bottom at all, given that Vaja wisely chose to provide small lips on both sides that extend just enough past the top of the iPod to prevent drop damage. Scratching of the iPod's exposed surfaces remains a possibility if you keep the iVod mini in your pocket with keys, or in some other potentially dangerous place, but we don't suspect most users would take that risk with a leather case like this one.

Assuming that the price doesn't scare you away - which it may if you want a custom color, engraving, and the belt clip - you're certain to love the iVod mini when you receive it. It's a little luxury worthy of a mini iPod.





**Exercise Cases.** We've tested many workout-friendly iPod cases on trails and in gyms, in dry heat and heavy rain. Only our favorites appear below.

## Teski Roadie



We've tested and knocked our fair share of iPod exercise cases, but we've finally found one that's good enough to recommend. Teski's Roadie accomplishes what Monster and Tune Belt didn't accomplish with their exercise offerings, namely providing a nice looking case that also does a good job of attaching to the user's arm and holding the iPod. And its pricetag makes it a perfect alternative to the other, inferior options.

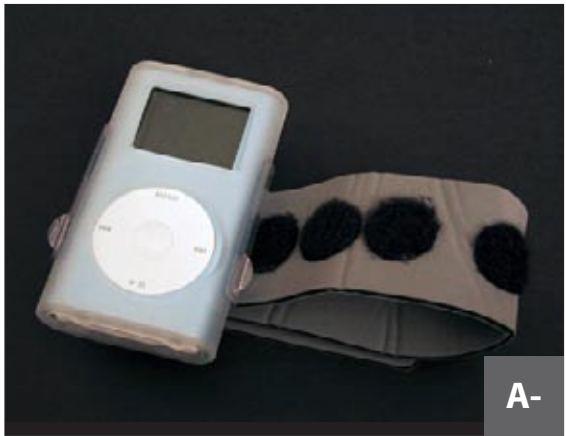
The first version of the Roadie consisted of four pieces: a white rubberized front shell, a hard (thin plastic) black back shell, an elastic and velcro armband, and a hard plastic belt clip. Only three of these pieces are intended to be used at once - the belt clip and armband are interchangeable, while the front and back shells snap together to enclose an iPod. Smooth, rounded holes are left for the iPod's top and bottom ports. In the first version, the face of the iPod was left entirely exposed, though vaguely protected by a couple of millimeters of elevated rubber lip across the front edge. Currently shipping Roadies now include a transparent plastic cover for the iPod's face, remedying the one major concern we had when we first reviewed the product.

Unlike competitors, the Roadie's arm strap looks good and holds firm. The elastic stretches enough to accommodate any arm size, and multiple pieces of Velcro are designed to reinforce the band's grip by providing multiple adhesive sites. Pull the arm strap out and the back of the case has a deftly designed, snap on belt clip that locks in and detaches nicely.

Even though the materials used in the Roadie aren't expensive, Teski's design makes the most of the components. Because of the two-piece central case design, the company has been able to offer a pack of three replaceable colored front covers (Clear (Transparent), Black and Sport Orange) for an additional \$9.95. The rear cover is a bit on the thin side, though not dangerously so, and when the two halves are snapped together, they form a good seal specific to the size of the iPod inserted inside. Still, we would have preferred some sort of transparent plastic protection for at least the screen, which would have made the iPod less susceptible to damage in a fall on an uneven surface. The rubberized front will absorb some shock, but not prevent abrasions.

With its transparent molding, Monster's iSportCase is a cooler looking case, but Teski's is the one we'd want to work out with. If you can find it for \$19.95, consider the Roadie a highly viable touring companion. Teski offers the Clear (Transparent) in its 3 color pack.

## Speck Products Mini Arm Band



Apple and Speck Products both make arm band accessories for the iPod mini, but in a surprising turn of events, Speck's Mini Arm Band (\$29.95) came out on top. Apple's white and black iPod mini Armband (\$29.00) is little more than a neoprene strip with a plastic iPod mini clip and Velcro arm attachments. Speck's version includes a soft plastic iPod mini case, a transparent iPod clip large enough to hold the encased iPod mini, and an almost identical neoprene and Velcro arm band combination. As a result, your iPod is better protected against rain, sweat, and accidental droppage in Speck's offering, which suffers from only one unfortunate design choice: instead of Apple's classier black neoprene, Speck chose a muted green.

Marware makes a couple of our favorite iPod cases, and the SportSuit Convertible (available for 3G, 4G and mini iPods) is one of them. Highly similar from iPod version to version, the exercise-friendly Convertible case comes in six colors for 3G and 4G iPods (\$39.95) and five iPod mini-matching colors for its smaller enclosure (\$34.95).

While the base of product is a Marware SportSuit - a quality iPod case made largely from stitched neoprene and see-through plastic - the distinctive concept is the Convertible part, a detachable hard front protective flap that attaches with Velcro to the top of the SportSuit. You slip the iPod into the neoprene case for everyday use, which has a hole to permit you easy access to the iPod's controls, then attach the hard flap only when you need the extra anti-scratch protection for the full front of the iPod.

It's a good idea, and it works well. A velcro latch at the Convertible flap's bottom holds everything closed, like a typical PDA case, only Marware's implementation is harder and more water-resilient. There's also a pouch within the flap large enough to hold headphones or keys while you're exercising. A pop-open rubber guard protects the Dock Connector port, too.

DLO makes a highly similar product called the Action Jacket (below), which uses seemingly less expensive components and a simpler design. Coupled with Marware's included SportSuit Convertible armband, which feels better-made and looks at least slightly nicer than DLO's, the Convertible proves a very good workout option - perhaps the best available for people who jog in inclement weather conditions or places where full iPod face and/or anti-shock protection would be important.

Additionally, while the Convertible version of the SportSuit case features rear straps to hold the armband in place, Marware also includes a detachable hard plastic belt clip, which integrates substantially better with the Convertible than DLO's almost afterthought belt nub does with the Action Jacket. Finally, Marware's selection of color choices elevate the SportSuit another notch or two above the Action Jacket; the pink mini version especially won female nods of approval when we were testing the cases.

Though we're not fans of neoprene as an everyday case enclosure for iPods, the material stands on at least equal footing with the plastic in Teski's Roadie and the rubber in Speck's Mini Arm band as a compelling protectant for outdoor use and high-impact work outs. We therefore recommend the SportSuit Convertible most vigorously to those who will have a real need to keep its top on.

## DLO Action Jacket 4G and mini

Think of DLO's Action Jackets as the SportSuit Convertible series-minus. That's not an entirely bad thing - they're minus in price (\$29.99 for the iPod mini, \$24.99 for the 4G iPod), but also minus in the Convertible's key feature, namely its hard front flap, as well as its quality Dock Connector guard, its thin belt clip and soft arm band. DLO does include an acceptable but bulkier belt clip, plus an elastic arm band rather than Marware's neoprene one. The result is a case that's not as comfortable or as nice in the details, but...

It's an acceptable option, especially given that it's one of the only 4G iPod exercise cases presently on the market. It's pretty much the definition of our old "It's OK" rating - not offensive in any way, and it does what it claims to do as an exercise case. It just isn't the best alternative available, and isn't as comfortable as we would have hoped. But the price might be right for your needs.

## Marware SportSuit Convertible 4G





**Hard Cases.** Plastic, metal, and combinations thereof have led to the most resilient iPod cases available. But pricing and practicality remain key issues.

# Contour Design Showcase 3G & 4G



Contour's series of hard plastic iPod Showcases (\$32.95) are unquestionably amongst the best third- and fourth-generation iPod cases available. Differing only in a few small particulars, these clear and solid-colored plastic shells are simple in concept and impressively detail-oriented in execution, dotting all their i's and crossing their t's to a point where we have no complaints. And if you read iPodlounge's reviews, you know that's no easy feat.

Each Showcase locks your iPod inside a hard rubber colored frame that includes two pieces of transparent plastic and a smart articulating latch. This frame – black or white in 4G models and in six other colors for 3G models – surrounds the iPod with soft parallel curves, exposing only its headphone port, Hold switch, and Dock Connector port to the elements. Each hole is sized generously enough for whatever you need to plug in, thankfully.

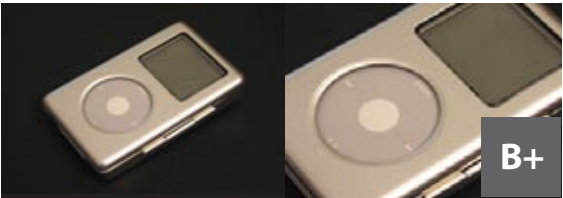
Transparent plastic reveals the iPod's front face and a significant portion of its chrome back panel – enough to see the Apple iPod logos and the capacity of the unit inside. Both Showcases include a hole for Wheel access, though the newer case includes a superior, smooth beveled circle instead of the modestly awkward, flat cut five holes that appeared on its predecessor. It's a cleaner, nicer look, thanks to Apple's superior new iPod design.

Insertion and removal are easy and problem-free. The front and back halves of each case are joined by rubber on the left side, and snapped together firmly with Contour's nice articulating right side latch. Once inside, an iPod looks great and feels entirely secure; the rubberized sides of the case and hard transparent plastic surfaces are more than enough to prevent your iPod from sustaining serious drop or scratch damage. All that's missing is Wheel protection, perhaps in a flip-down mechanism like the one implemented by Speck in its Flipstand cases. Most users won't care; we didn't.

The only differences between the cases are small; an included foam sized insert (for thinner iPods) no longer covers the 4G's rear transparent panel, and the 4G's belt clip uses a little more plastic for reinforcement. Both changes are welcome: the new case shows off the iPod inside even better than before, and feels firmer when belt clipped, though the 3G's still great.

If history's any indicator, both Showcases will likely remain at or near the top of their respective hard plastic case piles. We recommend both without reservation - unless you're strongly in need of Click Wheel protection or a different colored case. Be prepared to wait a while for something this good.

# Pacific Rim 4gShield



If you like the concept behind the Showcase but want something a bit tougher, Pacific Rim's latest 4gShield (\$34.99) case may well meet your needs. Made largely from aircraft aluminum, the 4gShield includes a fully integrated hard plastic screen protector, a Click Wheel hole, a belt clip, and a side hinge to give you easy access to the key parts of your iPod. In essence, it's a compromise between Matias' iPod Armor, which offers a totally encompassing metal solution, and the Showcase, which is hard but not as impervious as metal. Some won't like the size of the 4gShield's holes, which keep it from being water- tight, but it's solid.

# Matias Corporation iPod Armor



Perhaps the single most impervious iPod case on the planet is Matias' iPod Armor (\$49.95), an aluminum shell that covers virtually every nook and cranny of the iPod's surface. So much, in fact, that users have reported that their iPods survived roll-overs by tank treads and car tires. But this protection comes at a cost - you can't access the iPod's screen or controls unless you pop open the case. Thankfully, the hold switch and headphone jack are exposed so you can use the iPod, and the Dock Connector sits behind a rubber guard. A detachable belt clip's also included for the price. We love the iPod Armor, but it has times and places of better and lesser utility.

While highly protective, Matias' iPod Armor designs for full-sized iPods have a consequence: their all-metal shells preclude access to the encased iPod's controls unless you flip open the front panel. Thankfully, Matias' iPod Armor mini case (\$49.95) does the old formula two steps better. It wraps around the mini's sides, holding it in place even when the front panel is opened. And Matias now uses a hard transparent plastic screen guard, thereby enabling users to better use the iPod mini while it's encased - assuming they have a remote control or only want to see what song is playing.

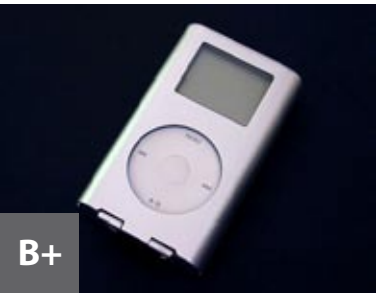
However, unlike its predecessors, Armor mini uses metal more decoratively than functionally. While the exterior of the case includes thin sheets of hard aluminum, the interior is comprised mostly of hard plastic. How powerful is armor that's made from plastic?

Practically speaking, the metal/plastic distinction is next to irrelevant: in almost any situation, iPod Armor mini protects against scratches, shocks, and drops better than any of the other iPod mini cases we've tested, particularly given that it fully covers the mini's Click Wheel and screen. Only the iPod mini's top is left exposed, a design decision that consequently allows users to attach accessories such as the iTrip and NaviPod while the Armor's on. On balance, we think that this was a good design choice.

It's tough to ask for perfection from any iPod case maker, though our standards go up when prices go up. Matias \$49.95 asking price is quite high given current competition, though the iPod Armor mini looks and feels well-made, and includes a fully detachable belt clip that slims down the case's profile considerably versus its competitors. While Speck has done a great job with its all-plastic Mini FlipStand, and Innopocket has a good solidly metal case in their Metal Deluxe Case, Matias' design remains an excellent option for those who need guaranteed protection.

# Innopocket Metal Deluxe Case

Whereas Matias relies heavily on plastic for its iPod Armor mini, Innopocket decided that the Metal Deluxe Case (\$34.90) would use a padded aluminum shell with only two major plastic parts: an integrated clear hard plastic screen protector, and a pop-off belt clip.



But Innopocket's design doesn't cover as much of the mini's body as Matias did. There's no Click Wheel protection - which some users now expect from metal cases - and there's also a hole in the back of the case to let you pop the mini out, plus small holes for the top and bottom ports. Insertion and removal is a bit of a challenge, but once inside, the iPod mini is satisfactorily protected on all sides (save its holes) against both scratching and impacts. For those who want full-time Wheel access, the Metal Deluxe Case is a very good compromise.



# Matias Corporation iPod Armor mini



# Power Support Crystal Jacket and Speck Mini FlipStand

With two different approaches to hard plastic iPod mini coverage, Speck and Power Support's cases each have their advantages and disadvantages. Power Support's Crystal Jacket (\$20.00) is cheaper, includes Wheel Film protection for the mini's Click Wheel, and provides full top and bottom port access with minimal protection therein. Speck's Mini FlipStand (\$29.95) is beautifully engineered to provide flip-up hinge access to the iPod's top and bottom ports, plus a one-of-a-kind retractable Click Wheel cover, but is modestly useful when standing up and way too protective (restrictive, even) of the Dock port.





**Specialty Cases.** If you're going to hike, swim, or travel with your iPod, these cases are the very best we've seen to protect your music library.

## Otterbox oPod



The iPod has a total of one truly waterproof case and one case that's pretty much everything-else-proof except for water. Otterbox makes the latter product, and despite the fact that you shouldn't take it in a lake or a pool, it's a remarkably well-designed and uniquely protective 3G iPod case.

Unlike the waterproof LiliPod (below), Otterbox's oPod (\$49.95) is impressively tailored to real-life use of the third-generation iPod. Available in five colors (white, pink, green, blue, and yellow), the oPod gives the user full but protected access to the iPod's controls and screen, plus two different ways to connect to your body: an included, detachable belt clip, and an optional neoprene armband for athletic use (\$14.95).

While we wouldn't pick oPod as an armband accessory, it's great as an all-conditions resilient iPod enclosure. The white plastic back shell is rubber lined on the inside as a sealant and hard rubber cornered on the outside for anti-drop protection. Headphone plugs fit in the oPod and iPod without a problem. The two shells lock together with a hinge at the top, comfortably sealing the iPod in without potential for scratching or other damage.

We found the iPod's touch-sensitive controls surprisingly easy to use inside, and though steam and water can fog the plastic membrane slightly, we always found it easy to wipe the outer screen and see what was going on. That said, we would have liked a beefier belt clip, given the product's otherwise resilient design and likely appeal to "extreme" athletes and harder core users.

Officially, Otterbox states that the oPod is "dustproof, dirtproof, sandproof and drop-proof," which makes the case better than most for users with active lifestyles, and enlisted iPod lovers who happen to be stationed in deserts or jungles. But waterproof, it's not. Otterbox accurately describes the oPod as "water resistant," and touts it as rain and pool safe, which we agree that it is, so long as it's not being submerged and used under water. It'll survive an "oops I dropped it in the pool" experience, but not an "I want to use it in the pool/lake/ocean" one.

The oPod is the only 3G iPod hard case to offer such a complete degree of protection while permitting both screen and control access. Consequently, we think that though an oPod's value will depend on a buyer's particular needs, it's easy to recommend for anything other than pool parties.

## Eroch LiliPod



Eroch Studios' LiliPod (\$35.00) is the iPod's only truly waterproof case, and can be submerged in water (save perhaps scuba diving) without fear. But it has faded into the background in recent days, its design antiquated by newer and more appealing cases like the oPod. As a while two-piece hard plastic shell with a foam interior, the LiliPod more than resembles the generic watertight cases that protect cigarettes and other consumables. It affords no access

to the iPod's screen, controls, or ports save a watertight headphone jack on its bottom (the iPod's placed upside down inside). A nice fabric necklace accompanies the case to permit its easy use at a beach or pool. But without a pair of waterproof headphones, its use is limited, even more so since you can't use a remote control or in any way change volume or songs. It may be the only waterproof iPod case, but a sequel's desperately needed.

We rarely award an unqualified A grade to iPod accessories, but Australia-based luggage maker STM's Cocoon (\$39.95) case for the iPod scores one across three different iPod platforms - they've developed a really nice looking, appropriately protective travel case that's compatible with the 3G, 4G, and iPod mini (the latter only with an optional accessory).

In the "larger protective iPod case category," the Cocoon succeeds where Monster's iCase - a huge 3G iPod-specific folio of a holder - went way overboard. Without dramatically expanding the footprint of a full-sized iPod, the Cocoon wraps any size of iPod in two layers of protection, one lightweight for general use and the second hard and substantial for traveling.

As of early September, 2004, each Cocoon package includes four transparent plastic iPod sheathes ("STM iPod skins") with detachable fabric lanyard necklaces, one each for thin and thick third-generation iPods, and one each for thin and thick fourth-generation versions. iPod mini skins are available separately for \$9.95 - a bit of a shame - and include a plastic tube-style necklace. Considering that they're not made from silicone rubber, they're actually pretty nice: iPods slip easily into each sheathe, which protects the screen but leaves exposed the 3G's buttons and Scroll Wheel (or 4G/mini's Click Wheel), as well as the top ports and Dock Connector slot. On the back of each STM skin is a white Velcro patch.

The Cocoon itself is a highly professional-looking dual-zippered grey hard shell that opens to reveal its own Velcro patch on one side and a mesh net on the other. Your sheathed iPod attaches to the interior Velcro patch while the mesh net offers enough space for headphones and a remote control. As nice as the case looks from the outside, it looks on the inside.

When zipped up, the Cocoon's top and bottom include holes for iPod headphone and port connectivity, limiting the unit's resilience to weather conditions but providing substantial protection against other types of damage. A non-detachable belt clip on the back of the Cocoon feels solid, yet is just large enough to suit belt-mounters' needs without excessively bulking up the case.

Overall, the Cocoon looks and feels great - month after its release, it's still as close to a perfect travel case for the iPod as we've seen. The brilliance of STM's design is its ability to address with plastic skins the average iPod user's need for less protectivity on the go, while the hard shell can be added to the outside of the iPod whenever you need it. Lanyards are a cute additional touch, as well. With a product this good, we hope to see more from STM in the very near future - perhaps a smaller case more specifically tailored to the iPod mini?

### Common Alternatives: Large Ballistic Nylon Zipper Packs



Be-Ez Travel Bag

Though Monster makes a similar product called the iCase (\$69.99), we opted to feature Be-Ez's Travel Bag for iPod 3G (\$39.95) instead because it's so similar, cheaper, has a bit smaller footprint (5.5" x 5.5" x 2") and for some reason comes with a free piece of music organization software called Ask the DJ iPod Edition (Mac only). Despite its identical use of water-resilient black ballistic nylon fabric as an outside covering, we weren't thrilled with the iCase because it was both large and largely impractical - a large fabric binder that just happens to hold a 3G iPod. Be-Ez's bag isn't really made solely for the 3G iPod, and can hold any 4G model as well, and has a bunch of extra neoprene compartments designed generically to hold, well, stuff. Like headphones, your power supply and remote control, or spare change. The iPod Photo, complete with its various pack-in accessories, would be the best fit for Be-Ez's Travel Bag; designed as it is to hold just an iPod and small items, STM's Cocoon stands out a lot more and is better for most of our purposes.

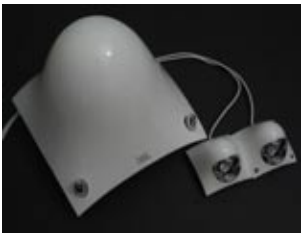
## STM Cocoon for 3G, 4G, Mini





**Speakers and Headphones.** After testing the best audio equipment designed and marketed for use with iPods, we bring you our top picks at each price point.

# JBL Creature II Speakers



iPodlounge has tested virtually all of the iPod-specific speaker systems released to date, and none compares in sound quality for the dollar to JBL's Creature II Speaker System (\$99.95, available for as little as \$72.00).

We always emphasize that great iPod speakers should deliver clean audio across the frequency spectrum from high (treble) response through the mid-range to low (bass) response. Surround sound is unnecessary; the iPod doesn't support it, so two-channel (left and right) audio suffices, so long as they're adequately separated. While portability is a plus, most iPod speakers wind up sitting in one place and rarely being moved. And for most people, price is key.

The Creature II system almost perfectly meets our requirements. Two small white and chrome iPod-matching satellite speakers provide crisp treble and mid-range response, while a large white plastic subwoofer creates a rich bass sound. When turned on, cool blue lights glow underneath each of the satellites and next to the power button on the rear of the subwoofer. Silver knobs on the subwoofer let you adjust the bass and treble of the system, while silver touch-sensitive plus and minus buttons on the right satellite speaker adjust the volume. You can position the pieces wherever you want for a greater stereo effect; they're connected by cables. And even if you don't tweak the bass, treble, or speaker locations, the Creatures sound better than any of the other iPod speakers we've tested. But the adjustable bass and treble guarantee you'll create sound you like.

Notably, the Creatures aren't portable speakers - they come with a power cube, won't run off battery power, and are only "portable" in that they're neither too heavy nor large to occasionally carry from room to room in a house as necessary. But then, competing options either themselves aren't practically portable, or trade audio quality for their portability, a bad compromise from our perspective unless you frequently use portable speakers.

The only thing really missing from the Creatures is an integrated iPod dock, which is featured in JBL's On Stage and Altec Lansing's offerings, but limits their use with the iPod Photo. The Creatures are way cheap, include an audio cable, and work with Apple's Dock (\$39) or SendStation's PocketDock (\$29.95). Your total price will still be around \$100, and we're certain that you'll love the sound.

## JBL On Stage Speaker System



What do you do when you know you've invented the best speaker system for the iPod? If you're JBL, you shrink it down, add an integrated iPod dock, and raise the price. On Stage (\$199.95) offers 90% of the Creature II's sound quality in a considerably more compact package, but like the Creatures, On Stage isn't portable - it requires an AC power adaptor (included) and is designed to sit flat on a desk. Four speakers are hidden under a silver metal grille, surrounding a set of touch-sensitive volume buttons and any sized iPod at front. There's also a port on the back so that you can connect your iPod to your computer while it's docked. But you can't adjust the bass or treble, and there's no way to pop batteries in - a shame given the size and price of On Stage relative to other products. It's not our first choice, but it's still a good one.

Across four different speaker products, Altec's inMotion series excels across the board at portability. The company's inMotion was the first battery-powered speaker and dock system specifically designed for the iPod, and was followed by the hardware-agnostic iM2s and deluxe multi-iPod-ready iM3s.

Made solely for use with the iPod mini, the iMmini speaker system radically simplifies Altec's higher-end inMotions, cutting their footprints, pack-ins, and prices. Measuring around 7" x 4.4" x 1", iMmini weighs only 10 ounces, and gets up to 24 hours of battery life out of four AA cells. A white AC power adapter is included for in-home play. And though the iMmini features smaller speaker drivers than the other inMotions, it produces surprisingly balanced sound - better, in fact, than in Altec's more expensive offerings.

Unlike other inMotions, the iMmini uses a single body shell with pop-out panels that expose its dock and a table mounting foot. These panels are a really well thought out and efficient way of protecting the iMmini's ports when closed. Under most circumstances, they do a fine job of keeping the iMmini standing up, too; just keep its power cord away from accidental tugs. A snap-on plastic panel covers its entire front when you travel.

We were surprised to discover that we actually preferred the sound of the iMmini to both the earlier inMotion speakers and Altec's newer iM3 speaker system. While the smaller drivers in the iMmini's speaker chambers aren't as powerful as their larger inMotion and iM3 brothers, they actually produce even more natural and pleasant treble and bass response.

This isn't to say that the iMmini produces perfect sound, though. Both of Altec's new speaker systems exhibited a bit of noise in their audio signals, a slight hissing sound that becomes more noticeable as the volume is adjusted above the 50% mark. And they aren't the aural peers of our less expensive reference JBL Creature speaker system, which exhibited a better dynamic range and of course better stereo separation. As with the earlier inMotions, the iMminis make more of a wall of sound than a stage with distinct left and right channels - though you can occasionally hear separation if you're close enough to the speakers, and it's no doubt a better sounding wall of sound than what's made by options such as Monster's iSpeaker.

Properly viewed, the iMmini is a highly portable speaker system for the iPod mini that delivers better than average audio quality for its size, and at a lower price than the earlier and larger Altec inMotions it largely replaces. We frankly love the way it looks, and substantially enjoy the way it sounds. It would be the first speaker system we'd recommend today to an iPod mini owner who will truly make use of its portability, though it's not the right option for people who want speakers for more than one iPod.

If portability isn't necessary, we continue to feel that JBL's Creatures offer the best price to performance ratio around for stationary use with an iPod. But travel speakers they're not, and the iMmini certainly does that in style.

## Another alternative: Altec's inMotion iM3 System



We really wanted to like Altec's iM3 speakers (\$179.00), and to some extent, we did: their white plastic and metal grille design looks great, includes a decent carrying case and international power adapters, and docks any generation of iPod from oldest to the present day. Best of all, the iM3s include a class-leading infrared remote control - the only one we've tested that properly switches tracks and regulates the volume of the speakers. But we found the audio quality of the iM3s to be a step or two lower than what we expected for the asking price - not as pleasant as even Altec's iMmini system (above), and no comparison against JBL's Creatures. Average users mightn't mind, discerning and price-conscious ones will. However, as compared with Bose's SoundDock (\$299), the iM3 system offers similar features, much greater portability, and comparably bass-heavy (though not quite as distortion-free) sound at a much lower price.

# Altec Lansing inMotion iMmini





# Sennheiser PMX60 Headphones



A-



Renowned for its high-end headphones, Sennheiser surprised us with the PMX60s, a \$29.95 pair of behind-the-neck headphones that delivered impressive audio quality for the dollar and a nice fit. Like ear buds, behind-the-neck headphones have their fans and detractors: they're clearly less conspicuous than large ear cups, but more visible than the average pair of ear buds. Rather than isolating the ear with foam or other padding, they generally direct audio from one flat speaker into each ear, hopefully providing enough volume to prevent outside sound from coming in.

Many headphones use some combination of small speakers, chintzy-looking external casings, and odd cords that make the user feel uncomfortable, look weird, or both. The PMX60s avoid all three traps: their large, foam-covered headphones are enough to cover 90% of a large ear; their black and chrome casings look professional, and their cord designs are elegant, with one hard cord from ear to ear around the neck, and one soft cord from left headphone to stereo jack. Three minutes after putting them on, all you'll feel is the hard cord wrapping cleanly around the top of each ear to gently keep the headphones in place, and the slight tap of the back of that cord at the top of your neck. There are no tangles, no inconveniences, and no discomfort. But the cord's a bit short: at a little over three feet long (1 meter), the cord worked fine for our purposes, and shouldn't be an issue for anyone with an iPod remote control, but those who need additional cord length may find the PMX60s slightly stifling in that regard.

More important was the fact that we really liked the sound of the PMX60s. They delivered crisper sounding audio and a larger-sounding audio field than the MX500s and Apple's iPod pack-ins, adding a sharper edge to the guitars of James Brown's The Payback while bringing the Godfather of Soul onto a separate piece of the stage from his band. The PMX60s therefore delivered a closer approximation of what we hear when using higher-end headphones, without delivering sound directly into the ear canal.

While users will appreciate the sound of the PMX60s in quiet rooms, their internal and external isolation leave a bit to be desired if there are other people or audio sources nearby. Unless you turn up the volume - not good for your ears - you'll hear some of the outside world around you, and the outside world will be able to hear some of whatever you're listening to, as well. If you can live with that - yes, we could understand why, given the quality of the PMX60s' audio - and don't strongly prefer smaller ear buds, we'd strongly recommend the PMX60s over the value-priced MX500s.

Good for the price: **Sennheiser's MX500s** and **Sony's MDR-EX71s**



A-

Less expensive than the PMX60s, Sennheiser's MX500s are in-ear buds rather than over-the-ear phones. They sound very similar to Apple's iPod pack-in ear buds - with a hint more treble - and even include a carrying case and in-line volume control for those who don't have an Apple remote. At \$19.95, they're a no-brainer if your iPod buds die, so long as you don't mind their blue buds and black cord. People might think you're listening to a Dell DJ, and that would of course be a very bad thing.



A-

Experiences with higher-end headphones have soured us only a little on Sony's MDR-EX70 and EX71 in-ear buds (\$39.95), which are still the most comfortable earpieces we've ever used. Their low price and bass-heavy audio endears them to younger iPod users, while the passive isolation afforded by their rubber ear tips is a major advantage for all types of listeners. Sennheiser's offerings deliver somewhat crisper, cleaner sound, but these will likely fit you better, and, if you like bass, meet your needs. Imported versions from Asia (\$49.00) are available in iPod-matching white.

# Shure E3c Sound Isolating Earphones



B



Especially for the price, iPodlounge has loved Shure's headphones: the E2 model (below) is a significant step up from more common \$30 alternatives, and we were therefore anxious to try the company's E3 earphones (\$179.99), at the very least to see what an extra \$100 would buy.

Like its competitors, Shure's in-ear headphones are inserted directly into your ear canals, forming a seal that keeps outside noise out. This "isolation" effect lets you hear more detail in music without turning up the volume. And Shure's are worn in a unique way: their cords, after exiting the earpieces, drape over the tops of your ears and continue down your back.

Each set of E3s includes a handy and compact zipper-style carrying case, which feels durable; sets of Ultra-Soft Flex sleeves and classic Flex sleeves, each in sizes of Small, Medium, and Large, plus a pair of yellow expanding foam earpieces; an earwax removal tool, and a multi-language user-guide.

Like the E2s, Shure's E3s have that almost intangible quality product "feel" of durability. And we found them extremely easy to wear, lightweight at 0.9 oz and consequently barely noticeable. They are unquestionably a wonderful improvement from the rather large and relatively heavy E2s. But the largest factor in E3 comfort is one's choice of sleeve. We disliked Shure's hard, thick Classic Flex Sleeves, and found them painful to use. But we found the new Ultra-Soft Flex Sleeves to be extremely comfortable, and also liked the Foam Sleeves. These latter two sleeves allowed us to listen continuously for up to six hours without any discomfort whatsoever. Our only issue was that the sleeves that isolated the best weren't the most comfortable, so you will likely wind up trading sound for comfort.

The first two words that crossed our lips when testing the sound quality of the E3s were "simply amazing," at least, for mid-priced headphones. If allowed only one word, we would choose "clarity." In direct listening comparison tests, our E2s (a prior high-water mark for low-to-mid-priced sound quality) often sounded comparatively muddled and dark. The E3s' sound is much more refined, especially in the mid and high ranges. We found the lows, mids, and highs to be consistently on-target: none were exaggerated or overpowering. Instruments were clear and distinct. While the bass is not exceedingly powerful, we would choose to characterize the E3's low-end as clear, accurate, tight, and appropriate. Users who prefer more dramatic bass might look elsewhere, such as to Future Sonics' EM3 earphones.

In our view, the mark of a good audio product is its ability to render earlier innovations unimpressive. Perhaps not surprisingly, the E3s dethroned Shure's E2s, making it possible for us as listeners to recognize specific flaws (i.e. relative lack of clarity) in the sound quality of the E2s. This is noteworthy in that the E2s had previously done the same thing to our cheaper earphones, showing the E3s for what they are: two steps or more above common in-ear headphones. No doubt Shure's E3s are for serious listeners: better than E2s especially in sound quality and potential for comfort, their biggest disadvantage is that they are nearly twice the cost.



B+

Solid quality under \$100: **Shure's E2c Earphones**

They say that you only realize the weaknesses of a given pair of headphones when you've used something better - and likely more expensive. For many users of Shure's E2c headphones (\$99, available for \$71), ignorance is bliss: they present considerably clearer audio than cheaper headphones, include removable rubber and foam tips to fit in your ears, and even come with a zippered carry case. True, they don't have the sound quality of Shure's E3s or the other, more expensive solutions we've presented here, and they're also a bit larger (center) than the Sonys (left) and Apple's pack-ins (right). But the E2c is a better value for the average iPod user, and sounds substantially better than \$50 and cheaper headphones.



# Etymotic Research ER-4 MicroPro



Readers of iPodlounge's forums will unquestionably come across positive references to Etymotic Research's earphones - near nirvana for serious audio lovers; listening tools that truly match the quality of the iPod itself.

Our testing fully verified the claims we had heard: for the price, you may never hear better sound anywhere. To be sure, the earphone or headphone experience differs from listening to living room speakers or a live performance. But what you do get with Etymotic's ER-4 (\$330.00) series is astounding clarity, frequency response and faithful reproduction, and an almost overwhelming sense of being purely "inside" the music.

Using a pair of ER-4 in-canal earphones (model ER-4P pictured) compels you to listen to tracks that go back ten, twenty, thirty or more years - songs from the days of radio, record players, cassette tapes, and CD players. You may be familiar with these songs, and think you know every guitar note, every trumpet solo, every drum roll, and all the accompanying instruments. But when the ER-4s are in your ears, you'll hear things you never noticed before - overdubs that were indistinct, voices hidden in a distant background, notes that were absent. The experience is something akin to hearing an expertly re-mastered old favorite album: everything sounds richer, more distinct, and just plain better.

On a scale from "tilted towards bass or treble" or "balanced," the Etymotics define balance: their response just sounds real, and "right", without adding tin or muddle to the original sound. For this reason, the ER-4 series is considered "reference" grade by audiophiles, a performance standard by which other products are measured. While other companies' earphones may offer stronger bass, or enhanced treble, the ER-4 series is known as accurate.

How does Etymotic Research achieve this? As a hearing aid company, they know ears. Also, they put their drivers inside the ears, making your ear canal part of the device and effectively sealing you off (by ~25db) from outside noise. You can listen to music practically anywhere without having to turn up the volume so much that it would damage or desensitize your hearing.

By contrast with over-the-ear cup earphones, the ER-4s are compact, and easily tote along with your iPod. They come with extra soft plastic and foam inserts, which fit most ears comfortably, as well as a clip that keeps them from pulling out, extra metal ear filters and a tool for inserting them into the earphones, plus an adapter so they fit both types of headphone jacks.

There are three ER models: the B, which are Binaural; the S, Stereo; and the P, which is the high gain model. Having tested both the S and P models, the latter of which features higher gain for use with portable devices, it's difficult to discern differences in sound quality. We felt that the S model seemed a bit smoother in response, with a little more punch in the P.

Is there a catch? Yes; the price. At \$330.00, they will scare off all but the serious audio lovers we mentioned at the beginning of the review. But we have come to love the Etymotics over almost all contenders. Even Ultimate Ears' awesome UE-10 Pro earphones (\$900.00) offered only a modest improvement in sound quality, and then only in bass response. If we were stuck on an island with one set of headphones, these might be the ones.

## Rich bass, reasonable price, clean sound: **Future Sonics EM3 Earphones**

Funny looking in a vaguely fleshy color scheme but great sounding, Future Sonics' Model EM3 (\$143.10) earphones deliver more bass-rich output than most of their upscale and highly "accurate" competitors. Two sets of foam in-canal inserts are included (large and small), and though they provide great isolation from outside noise, custom-fit earpieces are available at an extra cost. The only downer: noise from movement of their cords can be heard in the earphones, so keep still or batten them down.



# Ultimate Ears UE-10 Pro



After winning over customers with their UE-5 and UE-7 series earphones, Nevada-based Ultimate Ears has released the UE-10 Pro (\$900), an ultra-high end, custom fit in-ear design that the company claims is the "most accurate earpiece available." Given that price tag and the quality they claim to be offering, it's not surprising that the company's web site lists a huge collection of celebrity clients - current ones, they add - including Aerosmith, Blue Man Group, Britney Spears, Cirque Du Soleil, and plenty of others vividly representing their respective letters of the alphabet.

Admittedly, after testing the UE-10 Pros, we will verify Ultimate Ears' claims: these are awesome headphones, and in fact, the UE-10 Pro delivers the best audio quality we've ever heard. But the price tag - three times the price of a 20GB iPod - places them quite out of reach for most iPod owners.

Every set of UE-10 Pros is custom-fit to the buyer's ears during an appointment with an audiologist, who uses putty to make ear canal impressions. Those impressions are shipped to Ultimate Ears, and a week or two later, headphones arrive in a customized locking metal box bearing the buyer's name, along with a wax removal tool and an instruction manual.

Though the UE-10 Pros come in colors including iPod-matching white, they look incomparably cool when transparent. Three separate audio drivers are suspended in fully clear plastic, vividly showing the open-air sonic tunnels from drivers to eardrums. Similarly cool matching clear cables intertwine, forming helixes of sparkling metal that run nearly four feet from end to end. Ultimate Ears currently offers replacement cables in four colors - we're still waiting on a white color option for those.

Having tested numerous headphones, the UE-10 Pros are without question unstoppable as far as accuracy and balance are concerned. As with the Etymotic ER-4 series, entire libraries of music will beg to be re-played with the UE-10 Pros so that you can hear previously unheard instruments, layers of sound, and even muddled lyrics. However, the UE-10 Pros modestly top both the ER-4 series and Ultimate Ears' older UE5cs in fidelity, accurately reproducing not only highs, but noticeably giving somewhat fuller body to the mid- and low-range. Added bass is the UE-10 Pros' strongest suit.

They're pretty comfortable, too. We both found the overall comfort level of the earphones to be surprisingly comparable to our favorite pairs of in-ear buds, despite their larger size. But custom-fitting mightn't be right for everyone: the UE-10 Pros aren't as soft as Sony's MDR-EX71s, or as easily removed from your ears as Etymotics. But they fit and isolate quite well.

You'll note that we're qualifying our praise just a little. Like the Etymotics we love so much, Ultimate Ears' products aim for accuracy rather than enhancement of the original audio source, and at some point you can barely get more accurate than the superb products that have come before. The audio difference between the \$900 UE-10 Pros and the \$330 Etymotics is very slight, though the price difference is profound, and while the custom fitting is impressive, there are reasons to like standard-fit ear phones, too. This is a very exclusive product for an exclusive audience, and though we highly recommend it, we know quite well that other earphones are going to be far more appealing to the majority of our readers - solely in price, but not in audio performance, where the UE-10 Pros are very hard to beat.



## Still pricey, but not \$900 pricey: **Ultimate Ears UE5c Earphones**

If \$900 for a set of UE-10 Pros shocks your pockets, Ultimate Ears' lowest-end UE5c earphones (\$550) are a better value for typical users. Though they have only two drivers per earphone to the UE-10s' three, the UE5Cs sound 95% alike, and go through the same custom fitting process used across all of Ultimate Ears' more expensive offerings. The black ones pictured here are only one of the colors available - like the UE-10s, they can be had in white.



**In-Car Accessories.** Whether your car has a FM radio, an old cassette deck, or a modern line-in port, there's a way to blast iPod tunes on the road.

## SiK din (line-out) & imp (car charger)



B+

iPodlounge routinely notes in its car accessory reviews that there are good and bad ways to pull audio from your iPod. The best accessories bring line-out audio from the iPod's bottom Dock Connector port through a cable to a direct line-in jack found on your car stereo. But since many cars lack a line-in jack, the second best option involves Dock Connector iPod output to a cassette tape adapter for your car stereo. FM transmitters will always rank a distant third to these options. SiK's din (\$21.95) is designed to inexpensively help you accomplish the first or second option.

The din consists of a white Apple Dock Connector plug and two cables, one leading to a line-quality female audio port, the other to a female FireWire port. SiK's imp combines din with a white car charger that uses a male FireWire plug. When din is used alone, you gain access to the iPod's line-out audio, and when SiK's products are put together, your iPod recharges in a car while outputting its best quality audio.

Neither din nor imp is a rocket science product, but they both do what they promise to do. SiK's use of a thin Dock Connector maximizes din's compatibility with case accessories. And while the set of detachable white wires and components may or may not match your car's interior, they do provide you with the ability to separate the components for the din's use indoors - something that Belkin's comparable Auto Kit does not. For the price, the two parts together are a good value, and recommended.

## Belkin Auto Kit

For one reason alone, and despite its higher price tag, Belkin's Auto Kit is preferred by one of iPodlounge's editors for his own car: it doesn't poke out as much as SiK's imp from the car's power adapter port.

The Auto Kit is more or less identical in functionality to SiK's imp, only \$10 more expensive and sleeker in appearance. Due in part to Belkin's ongoing iPod development collaborations with Apple, the Auto Kit manages to perfectly match the glossy and classy white plastic look of full-sized iPods, hiding a subtle yellow power light under the Belkin logo on its front. As a small nub protruding from your car's power adapter, it features only one dial - a volume adjustment for its built-in amplifier (not present on SiK's imp, or especially useful unless your car's stereo is terrible) - plus a port for line-out audio, and a cable leading to a male Dock Connector plug.

You plug the Auto Kit into your car and into your iPod, and then plug either a line-out audio cable or cassette adapter into both the Auto Kit's port and car. As with SiK's imp, you're left with a mess of cables, but there's not as much sticking out of your car's power port. It's still white and conspicuous, but not as conspicuous, and while its Dock Connector plug is a little less universally friendly than SiK's, it works with most of the best cases. It's our close second recommendation for typical users, mostly because of price.



B+

## SendStation PocketDock FireWire/Audio Line Out

SendStation makes at least three PocketDock iPod-to-standard data or audio adapters, and we've liked all of them. The company's FireWire & Audio Line Out adapter serves as a tiny plastic replacement for Apple's larger Dock, providing a FireWire port and an audio line-out port. Lacking a USB port, this PocketDock remains ideal for car enthusiasts who hope to make their own in-car iPod set-ups with line-quality audio. While higher priced than SiK's din adapter (\$21.95), this PocketDock (\$29.95) is smaller and more travel friendly, and comes with its own set of matching white audio cables, which we really liked.



B+

## Griffin Technology iTrip and iTrip mini

iPodlounge has reviewed and really liked each of Griffin's iTrip FM transmitters, one for full-sized iPods (\$35.00) and another made for the iPod mini (\$39.99). Each plugs in to an iPod's headphone jack, uses the iPod's screen to let you pick a radio station, and then broadcasts iPod audio into any nearby radio - car or home. No spare battery is required; the iPod's battery provides power.

Save for their casings and the fact that you can boost the iTrip mini's broadcasting power by exposing an antenna wire hidden under its top (a FCC no-no, so don't do it), the iTrips are identical. The full-sized iTrips look a hint cooler, ideally matching the shiny white iPods, whereas the matte white iTrip mini fits the iPod mini's size but not color or texture.

Griffin's channel surfing interface for both iTrips ingeniously utilizes the iPod's existing interface and screen. Tuning is accomplished through an iPod playlist titled iTrip Stations, showing channels from 87.9 to 107.9. Click on a specific station, and within 15 seconds, the iTrip broadcasts a signal there. Griffin offers additional software on its web site to enable the iTrip to broadcast elsewhere in the world, including frequencies from 88.0 to 108.0 (Europe) and 76.0 to 90.0 (elsewhere). It bears some emphasis that such international tuning just can't be achieved on most other FM transmitters. When the iTrips find a clear station, they deliver a solid stream of stereo-separated music from the iPod,



A-

relatively static and distortion free. They do better the closer they get to your radio, and deliver a perfectly clear signal only when the radio station's totally empty. The same is generally true of other FM transmitters which cost more, eat more batteries, and don't look half as nice. We still prefer the sound and stability of Sony's CPA-9C, but as FM transmitters go, these are winners.



## Belkin TuneCast II FM Transmitter



B+

Larger, higher priced (\$49.99) and requiring AAA batteries, Belkin's TuneCast II has its own LCD screen and tuning buttons, and some iPodlounge users swear that it worked in places where the iTrips don't (and vice-versa). We found its performance similar in our testing, but didn't like having to lug around a droopy attachment, or the unit's fast battery drain. Consider it an alternative if the iTrip doesn't meet your needs.

## Monster iCarPlay Cassette Adapter

The name Monster Cable is synonymous with high-priced audio and video accessories - typically a 2- or 3-to-1 premium over indistinguishable components. Whether the iCarPlay Cassette Adapter (\$19.95) has a similar flaw depends on where you shop.

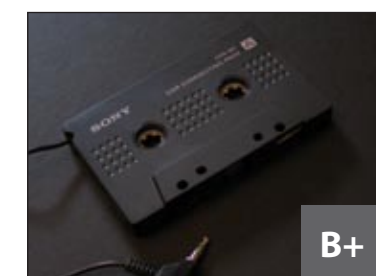


B

iCarPlay is a plastic housing that fits into your car's cassette deck, using an attached male audio plug to connect to your iPod's headphone jack (or better yet, the line-out port found on SiK's din, Belkin's Audio Kit, or SendStation's PocketDock). iPod music goes through the cable and into your stereo, sounding noticeably better in the process than it would through an FM transmitter, but not as good as it would if the iPod plugged directly into the speakers without the iCarPlay and a cassette deck in-between them.

Like Sony's CPA-9C Car Connecting Pack (below), the iCarPlay crimps the iPod's audio only modestly, and most users will like the quality of the output, as we did. However, the CPA-9C performs identically and is available at half the price from many retailers, while the light gray iCarPlay mightn't match your car's interior as well as Sony's black adapter. These points aside, you can't go wrong with the iCarPlay; it performs as promised and is much better than cassette adapters other than Sony's.

## Sony CPA-9C Car Pack



B+

cleanly channeling iPod music into your car stereo via the cassette deck, only Sony's will likely look better because of its black casing.

The best feature of Sony's CPA-9C Car Connecting Pack is its price: unlike Monster's product, it's often available for half its \$19.95 suggested retail. That aside, they sound the same,



# DLO TransPod FM All-in-One Car Mount



B



It's been advertised as "the only all-in-one car solution for your iPod," but with the release of Griffin's RoadTrip (below), that's not accurate any more. DLO's TransPod FM (\$99.99) combines three key features into a single white plastic package: utilizing a car's cigarette lighter power adapter for iPod battery charging and a built-in digital FM transmitter to broadcast the iPod's audio to the car's stereo, each TransPod also serves as an adjustable iPod mounting cradle. DLO's TransPods are rendered compatible with iPods and iPod minis alike via pack-ins, a plastic sizer and two soft adhesive pads.

Each TransPod includes a huge collection of parts, enabling different car users to adapt the product to their individual needs. Two adjustable mounting arms plug into your car's cigarette lighter power outlet, or alternately you can use a white corded power adapter and a two-piece screw-mounted attachment for permanent attachment to a dashboard. The TransPod also includes an auxiliary-out audio port on its left side, rendering it compatible with cassette tape adapters and some cars' line-in jacks.

Unfortunately, mounting the TransPod isn't a sure thing in all vehicles; its arms didn't fit one of our two test cars, and installation was only possible with the corded power adapter and the two-piece permanent mount. In our other car, the TransPod just narrowly avoided bumping into the gear shifter, creating a tight but proving ultimately usable in that vehicle.

On the bright side, we found both the TransPod's LCD screen and iPod's screen to be relatively easy to view when the device was attached and properly adjusted. Similarly, its charging performance was unsurprisingly fine: when the iPod or iPod mini was connected to the device, it charged, and the newest TransPod version includes a LCD indicator that flips between a lightning bolt and a full battery for those interested in its status.

As a FM broadcasting device, the TransPod does a solid job. Unlike other products (including earlier TransPods), the current version tunes down only as low as 88.1 - a small difference, but one that required us to do a little more channel searching before we found something comparably clear. That aside, we found it pretty easy to create good quality broadcasts. But as we routinely note in FM transmitter reviews, while the signal will be acceptable for most users - and may be the only option for some - it cannot compare in clarity to the sound of an audio signal from a cassette adapter. The TransPod produces a more balanced and acceptable auxiliary output sound from its aux-out port.

Those with compatible vehicles will no doubt find the new TransPod to be an attractive and useful accessory that fulfills virtually all of their in-car listening needs. It's the best such all-in-one device that we've seen to date. But those with incompatible vehicles will be sorely disappointed, as this new device comes tantalizingly close to an ideal all-in-one solution.

Almost a mirror image, except for the details: **Griffin's RoadTrip All-in-One Car Solution**



C+

Ninety percent of Griffin's products prove great in our testing, but a modest exception is the RoadTrip (\$79.95), which strongly resembles DLO's TransPod but proved larger and less stable in our test cars. Its bonus features aren't great: it requires iPods to use oddball clips to stay in place, and includes a detachable but generally useless FM transmitter, which has no internal battery and can't work separately with the iPod. It also lacks the mounting kit and line-out capabilities of the TransPod. The All-in-One category only has two major competitors, but DLO's is a few steps above this one.

# Battle of the Car Kits. Five ways to deliver line-quality audio from your iPod to your car speakers, and use your stereo controls to change tracks.

Unlike the rest of the Buyers' Guide, the kits listed here haven't all been tested by iPodlounge, so check our Forums before making a decision.

## Dension ICE-link 1.0 and 1.1



B+



C+

The concept behind Dension's ICELink 1.0 (\$149-199, rating B+) is simple: pry open your car stereo, connect the iPod directly into the stereo's electronics, and get clean line-quality music. Though it requires professional installation (~\$100), version 1.0 delivered as promised, and even charges your iPod while connected. But it uses the iPod's headphone jack for output, a no-no, has no cradle, and doesn't support all vehicles.

Version 1.1 of ICELink (\$189-\$229, rating C+) went further, using iPod line-out rather than the headphone jack, and including a cradle and mount instead of leaving your iPod in your ashtray or glovebox. But not all of the unit's features worked as advertised in our testing, and sometimes required user fiddling around to fix annoying crashes. Keep your fingers crossed for version 2.0.

## Multi Technology iPod2car Kit

Said to be compatible with many popular cars, Multi Technology Equipment's iPod2car (\$189.00) hijacks a car stereo's CD Changer port, permitting any Dockable iPod to play and recharge through the car's audio system. Use the stereo or the iPod to control playback, forward and reverse. No mount's included, but a five-minute install time is promised. If iPod2car works well - we're waiting to test it - it will be a popular option.



## Apple BMW iPod Adapter



Apple's products have always been niche-y, but this is ridiculous: the company's only official in-car solution (\$149 plus installation) works only with five BMW models. But if you have a compatible car, you'll be able to use its stereo to control your iPod, including the playback of five pre-set playlists.

## Alpine KCA-420i iPod Adapter



If you have an Alpine Ai-NET car stereo (\$200 and up), the KCA-420 iPod Adapter (\$100) can beautifully integrate your iPod into your car. The iPod's current song information and navigation details will appear on the Ai-NET's screen, and adjust with its knob and keys; you'll also recharge the iPod as you drive. No iPod mount or cradle is included.

## Other Options Viable do-it-yourself solutions

A number of car customization companies, including BlitzSafe, sell custom parts that you or a car installation professional can splice into virtually any car's audio system to create a close approximation of a direct line-in setup for your iPod. Blitzsafe's car-specific auxiliary audio input boxes (approx. \$100) create a set of audio input jacks for your car. You then need a way to pull audio out of your iPod - either a stereo mini-jack to stereo RCA cable plugged into the headphone jack, or the same cable plus Belkin's Auto Kit or SiK's imp for true line-out sound. These won't mount your iPod or display song titles on your car's stereo, but you'll get clean audio.



**The Best of the Rest.** iPodlounge's favorite iPod and iTunes expanders, from battery packs to photo readers, microphones, and radio recorders.

# Battery Technology iPod Battery & iPod Battery ii



A



A-



If iPodlounge gave out awards for iPod accessories that outperformed their advertised specifications, the list would be short, and would prominently include one company: Battery Technology Incorporated. Across its first two products, BTI's products have dramatically outperformed their advertised specifications, and where batteries are concerned, that's a great thing.

Both products are external iPod batteries made from full-sized iPod-matching white plastic, and they attach with to an iPod's Dock Connector port. Each features a "remaining power" indicator with four yellow circular lights, a button to turn that indicator on, a power on-off switch, and a collection of three variously sized iPod mounting brackets.

From there, they differ. BTI's first product, The iPod Battery (\$99.95), measures 5.0" x 2.6" x 0.8", and was initially advertised to extend the iPod's playback by 40 hours. In iPodlounge's testing, however, BTI's number was proved surprisingly inaccurate - The iPod Battery played for 73 hours on a single charge, which is to say three continuous days without interruption. BTI now markets the product as a 70-hour iPod extender, and that performance is unmatched by any other iPod battery on the market.

Including The iPod Battery ii (\$99.95), a smaller and sleeker sequel (4 1/8" x 2.75" x under 0.75") that is somewhat ironically also advertised to deliver 40 hours of continuous playback. While this new battery also outperformed its rated specification, delivering 49 hours and 20 minutes of playback with a 3G iPod, it's clearly not as incredible of a battery as its older brother. Even when used with a 4G iPod, which consumes less battery power, The iPod Battery ii provided a total of 55 hours, 37 minutes of play time before expiring. Full recharge takes about 90 minutes.

So why would someone prefer the second battery, given that both sell for the same price? Well, The iPod Battery is designed only for use with 3G iPods and iPod minis, including form-fitting face plates that attach to the battery pack with four fragile edge clips, whereas The iPod Battery ii also works with 4G iPods and uses a less fragile (but also less protective) mounting system. The sequel's other major improvement is a detachable belt clip; the original included a clip that couldn't be removed to slim the Battery down.

As a result, 3G and iPod mini users can choose between two or three days of extra iPod juice, while 4G users can get only two and a half. If you own a 3G or mini, you'll need to decide for yourself whether The iPod Battery ii's smaller form factor and ancillary features are enough to compensate for its lower capacity and similar pricing. There's no doubt that the original iPod Battery (iPodlounge A rating) delivers longer playback time for compatible iPods at the exact same price, only in a larger body.

Given that no other iPod battery we've tested comes close to these offerings, typically offering the illusion of lower cost by requiring you to purchase and replace AA batteries, it's easy to give both BTI products our highest recommendation. Though the lower-powered sequel would have been a better value if sold cheaper (hence our A- rating), both batteries are awesome, and tributes to both BTI's development efforts and conservative marketing.

# Belkin Media Reader



B+



On the heels of standalone devices designed to let photographers save their digital pictures to portable hard drives, Apple and Belkin teamed up a year ago to add a similar capability to the iPod. Their first device, the Media Reader (\$109.99), remains the best alternative yet devised to transfer the contents of camera media cards onto an iPod's hard disk, and moots the need to purchase extra media or carry a large laptop for the same purpose.

The Media Reader is self-powered, connecting to the 3G or 4G iPod's Dock Connector port to transfer photos from CompactFlash, SmartMedia, Memory Stick, MMC and SD cards onto an iPod's hard drive. Those photos can then transfer easily from iPod to computer via FireWire or USB 2.0.

Transfers are easy. Apple has included software in the iPod that starts automatically when the Media Reader's connected. A new menu called Photo Import appears, with an Import Photos option and lists of already-imported photos to choose from. Pop a media card in and one button press will transfer its contents. Then, you either choose "Done" and remove the card, or "Erase Card" to clean it entirely. Erasing has a safe confirmation screen and is accomplished fairly quickly, slowing based only on the number of files previously stored on the media card.

Like other quality iPod peripherals, Belkin's Media Reader matches the iPod's simple, clean elegance. Made mostly from shiny white plastic, the Media Reader's green LED flashes to indicate transferring activity. And it's only slightly larger than the iPod itself, with slight enough heft not to add any discernable weight to a bag. It uses AAA batteries, but the iPod's hard drive runs each time photos are stored, so serious photographers should pack The iPod Battery, too.

In order to put something at stake when testing the Media Reader, we put it through its paces with an iPod during an extended tour of Japan, using multiple memory card formats, reading the cards, copying their contents, then using the iPod to erase the cards, frequently repeating this process after taking more pictures. Our cards and photos had no problems of any sort.

Photo transfer times were acceptable, not great. We found that the Media Reader transferred data from our Lexar 8X CompactFlash cards at a rate of approximately 4 seconds per megabyte, which meant a 50 megabyte transfer took a bit over three minutes to complete. Serious photographers will want more speed, though casual users will find that the Media Reader accomplishes in minutes what would otherwise be expensive or impossible - the production of a completely usable blank memory card of equal size to one's current card, with storage of its prior photographic contents.

Though other devices do the same thing, and some of them are fuller featured, Belkin's solution is good for the price - especially when Belkin's site has a half-off sale. It's still the only device of its kind, and recommended.

## Another option, with mixed results: Belkin's Digital Camera Link

As a follow-up to the Media Reader, Belkin's Digital Camera Link (\$79.99) is a mixed bag. On the positive side, it is media card agnostic - it connects directly to a camera and transfers files to your iPod without using a card reader. And when it works, it's substantially faster than the Media Reader. But it's not compatible with quite a few cameras, and it drains three batteries - camera, DCL and iPod - every time you use it. If you carry lots of spare batteries and check Belkin's site to ensure compatibility with your camera, consider it.



B



# Griffin Technology iTalk Voice Recorder



Until late last year, the iPod only played back audio and couldn't record it. That changed when Apple and Belkin co-developed the Voice Recorder, a small microphone peripheral that records conversations, lectures, and monologues - but not music. Soon thereafter, Griffin released the iTalk (\$39.99), a superior alternative that adds both obvious and subtle features to Belkin's design. The result is one of the best iPod accessories we've seen, limited only by Apple's software for the iPod. And we know that Griffin would do better if it could.

In the best traditions of Apple products and accessories, iTalk is a truly plug-and-play device: you pop it on to the iPod's top and a "Record" option appears on the iPod's screen. Click it and a red light lets you know that a microphone has activated, with an on-screen count-up timer to let you know how long you've been recording. When you're done, you press "Stop," and there's a recording on your iPod that is time and date stamped for later listening. Select the recording (from a list that grows as you record) and it plays back through iTalk's speaker. Simple.

Simpler, in fact, than Apple and Belkin's own solution. Thanks to automatic gain control, the iTalk doesn't need to be adjusted in any way if you walk into a lecture hall or try to record a conversation where you're one inch away from the microphone - it dynamically adjusts its recording to pick up whatever's going on in the room, no matter how large the room. Not so with the Voice Recorder, which lacks even a switch to adjust the gain.

iTalk also has a port for an external microphone and a pass-through headphone jack, features missing from the Voice Recorder and incorporated into Belkin's later and separate Universal Microphone Adapter (\$39.99), though you can't use both at once in the iTalk. No matter: iTalk has what both the Voice Recorder and Universal Microphone Adapter lack when combined: a superior built-in speaker and great microphone.

We were impressed by its crisp rendition of voices, and its apparent lack of noise when we listened through headphones. Ambient noise became more noticeable (though still not bothersome) at a distance of thirty feet from the built-in microphone, and it became hard to separate voice from background with that microphone only at around the 40 foot mark. With the right external microphone, this won't be a major problem. It's also worth noting that while iTalk's speaker outdoes Belkin's, it's still not great.

However, all three devices share a major limitation: the iPod is currently constrained to recording in monaural WAV format sound at a mere 8 KHz, which means that no matter how superb the microphone (or other audio source) you connect, the recording quality will always be comparatively low-grade, and because of the WAV format, will consume a megabyte per minute. Until Apple lets the iPod record in high-quality stereo with AAC or MP3, the iTrip and its competitors will fall short of their true potential.



## First of its kind and second in our rankings: Belkin's Voice Recorder

Belkin's Voice Recorder (\$49.99) isn't our favorite such iPod accessory, but it does have its advantages - it comes with a protective plastic headphone plug guard, is physically slightly smaller than the iTalk, and may be cheaper you order it during a Belkin half-off sale or find it at the right retailer. But in terms of raw recording and playback performance, we think that it's a clear notch down, and lacks a composite headphone and external microphone jack - so you'll need the Universal Microphone Adapter (\$39.99) for that.



# Griffin Technology RadioSHARK



Is Griffin Technology's new RadioSHARK (\$69.99) an iPod accessory? If you've ever wanted to record FM or AM radio programs for later playback, you'll sure think so - RadioSHARK easily transforms radio broadcasts into iPod-compatible digital music files. Griffin bills it as TiVo for radio, and iPodlounge generally agrees.

Combining a large white fin, a chrome base, a USB cable and some software, RadioSHARK makes radio recording simple. Install the software on your PC or Mac, plug in the fin, and you'll pick up FM and AM radio. Like TiVo, you can easily "time shift" radio programming, pausing and rewinding live broadcasts, or creating VCR-style timed or recurring recordings of whatever you desire. Three lights on each side of the fin glow blue to indicate power, and red when recording.

While pause and rewind may be of marginal use on live radio, timed recording is unquestionably a killer feature - just ask any person who loves Howard Stern, Rush Limbaugh, or NPR. Or ask any teenager whose favorite band will be performing on the radio at some inconvenient hour. With RadioSHARK, just set the timer and listen whenever.

Griffin's software keeps the process simple and clean - nicer looking on the Mac than on the PC, but otherwise functionally similar. We found channel seeking and equalization to be as simple as possible, with a list of EQ presets and 10 bands to tweak as you desire for bass, treble, and midrange. Best yet, RadioSHARK integrates with iTunes, automatically converting your recordings into uncompressed AIFF or compressed MPEG-4 (AAC) format, then dropping them into an iTunes playlist of your choice. Currently, you can record anything from pristine CD-quality audio down to highly compressed but still listenable audio (64kbs). At that bit rate, you'll need around 30 megabytes of iPod space per hour of radio - not bad, really, even if you have only an iPod mini's space to play with.

Our only real issue with the RadioSHARK is that in an area with plenty of radio interference, we had limited ability to cleanly tune AM and FM radio signals - an antenna issue. We fixed the problem by adding and coiling a USB extension cable (\$8), and hope Griffin will offer a similar or superior option in the near future. The RadioSHARK's other limitations are relatively minor and will likely be remedied by future software upgrades, as Griffin has a good track record of supporting its products. But as currently sold, it does pretty much everything radio we've wanted for the last 15 years.



## Apple AirPort Express



If the iPod revolution will be wireless - which Apple's own job listings strongly suggest that it will - the AirPort Express (\$129.00) is highly likely to be one of its hubs. Surprisingly PC- and Mac-compatible, AirPort Express is a pocket-sized but complete 802.11B and G wireless base station and USB printer server, but those aren't its strong points for music fans. Apple's already developed iTunes, software that lets music from iTunes play through any speakers connected to the AirPort Express (using either a 3.5mm stereo audio cable or optical Toslink cable), and there have been hints from Apple that surround-sound iTunes support and eventually wireless iPod support may be forthcoming. Even if they don't, this is a cool and highly portable little product, if a bit expensive for its practical functionality.

# The iPodlounge Report Card.

Hundreds of iPod and accessory reviews from 2001 to today, squeezed into two simple pages.

Adapters and Cables		Car Power Chargers, Kits and Transmitters		Cases - iPod mini	
SendStation PocketDock Combo	A	SiK imp in-car charger/line out	B+	Vaja iVod mini	A
SendStation PocketDock	A-	Dension ICE-Link Auto Integration Kit	B+	Power Support Square Type Sil. Jacket	A
SendStation FireWire & Line Out	B+	Belkin Auto Kit	B+	Lajo exoflpmini	A
Global Source Retractable USB/FW	B+	Sony CPA-9C Car Connecting Pack	B+	Tunewear Prie Classic Face Case	A
Gadget Accessories USB Sync Cable	D	DLO New TransPod FM (Dock Connector)	B	Matias iPod Armor mini	A-
<b>Batteries</b>		Monster iCarPlay Cassette Adapter	B	iSkin mini	A-
		Monster Ultra Low Profile Charger	B	Marware Convertible	A-
		Monster iCharger	B-	Lajo exo3mini	A-
		DLO TransPod (for original iPods)	B-	DLO Jam Jacket & Pro mini	A-
		Dension ICE-Link 1.1 Auto Integration Kit	C+	Power Support Crystal Jacket mini Set	A-
BTI's The iPod Battery	A	Griffin RoadTrip All-in-One Car Solution	C+	Speck Products Mini Arm Band	A-
BTI's The iPod Battery ii	A-	Macally iPodCarCharger	D	Innopocket Metal Deluxe Case	B+
Belkin Backup Battery Pack	B	<b>Cases - 4G/HP iPod (with Dock Connector)</b>		Lajo exo2mini	B+
Gadget Accessories Battery Pack	F	Contour Design Showcase	A-	Lajo exo2mini-fb	B+
<b>Car Mounts</b>		Marware SportSuit Convertible	A-	Speck Products Mini FlipStand	B+
		Power Support Silicone Jacket Set	A-	Vaja Classic case	B+
		iSkin eVo 2	B+	Sena Detachable Flip	B
		Pacific Rim Technologies 4gShield	B+	Tunewear Icewear	B
		Speck Products SkinTight 4G iPod Skin	B/B-	Speck Mini iStyle	B
Power Support Mobile Stand	A-	DLO Action Jacket 4G	C+	iLeath Mini Print Case	B
Belkin TuneDok	B-			Incase Handcrafted Leather Sleeve	B
ProClip in-car holder for iPod	B+			Global Source Deluxe Leather Case	B
Griffin PodPod	B+				
Pro Fit Ultimount	B				

## How and why we rate products

iPodlounge reviews and rates iPods and accessories in order to provide the iPod community with the honest, objective, and comprehensive source of product information. Our letter grade system was introduced in August 2004, replacing the icon-based grading system shown to the right, in order to provide an easy to understand but slightly more detailed summary of our conclusions.



**A** A grades are awarded to only the very best products, ones that we would **highly recommend**. An A- grade indicates one or two small deficiencies that limit the product's universal appeal, and for reference, even the original iPod would not have received an A+ grade from iPodlounge. We haven't awarded one yet, and may never do so.

**B** B+ and B grades are awarded to very good and good products, ones that we would **recommend** only to specific audiences. A B- grade is on the fine edge of "good" and "recommendable." It indicates a product that is better than average, but has a few medium to large issues that crimp its appeal. We would typically recommend a B- product only to people who really need its functionality.

**C** C graded products are "okay" or "average" ones that **we neither recommend nor dislike**. They perform all of their stated functions acceptably, but may not be attractively designed, well thought out, or appropriately priced. A C+ grade indicates that the product was a little bit better than average, but still not "good" or "recommendable." The C- grade indicates that the product was on the edge of being contemptable, and though it worked substantially as promised, possessed some serious design issues.

**D** D graded products are ones that we **actively disliked** for some reason. Typically, the reason is that the product provided such substantially below-average design, performance or pricing that it was nearly laughable by comparison to other available offerings. Alternately, it may have been defective when we received it or unfit for a major stated purpose because of poor design. A D+ signals that we were on the edge of a C, but felt concerned about the safety of the product. A D- means that the product was close to historically terrible.

**F** F graded products are loathsome. They were **either pointless or dangerous** when we tested them, or otherwise quite substantially failed to conform to their promised levels of performance. We do not award F+ or F- grades; a flat F is considered "failing". While we reserve the right to award either D or F grades to those rare products that we receive for review in unsafe, defective or materially damaged condition, we only award an F if such defects could seriously damage end-users' iPods.

Cases - iPod mini (continued)		Cases - 1G & 2G iPods (continued)		iPods					
Marware Safari	B	Waterfield Designs Sooper Dooper	A-	Apple 3G iPod 15GB	A				
Speck Products Mini Skin	B	J.R. Hill & Co. iPod Sleeve Deluxe	A-	Apple 2G iPod 20GB Mac	A				
Matias Clear iPod Armor mini	B	Matias iPod Armor	B+	Apple 4G iPod: For New iPod Users	A-				
DC Shoes / Incase Sleeve	B-	Contour Design iSee	B+	Apple 2G iPod 10GB PC	A-				
Marware Basic	C+	Groove Jacket	B+	Apple 4G iPod: For Power Users	B+				
Marware Runabout	C+	MARWARE SportSuit Sleeve	B+	iPod mini: For New iPod Users	B+				
Lajo exomini	C+	Vaja Classic Case	B	iPod mini: For Power Users	B+				
DLO Action Jacket mini case	C+	Incase Designs Sleeve	B	<b>Microphones &amp; Mic Adapters</b>					
Bird-Electron POCO	C	OP/TECH USA MP3i Pouch	B						
<b>Cases - 3G iPod (with Dock Connector)</b>		The Pouch MP3 Player Carrying Case	B						
		Belkin iPod Case	B-			Griffin iTalk	A-		
		NeoPod Neoprene Case	B-	Belkin Voice Recorder	B				
		Speck Products FlipStand	C+	Belkin Universal Microphone Adapter	C+				
		Xigma Leather Case	C+	<b>Other</b>					
Willow Design BiFold Case	C								
Krusell Handit Case	C	Griffin RadioSHARK	A-						
OWC Pod Protector	C	Power Support Crystal Film Screen Prot.	A-						
<b>Cleaners &amp; Polishes</b>		JAVOScreen	B+						
		Belkin Media Reader	B+						
		Apple AirPort Express	B+						
		Belkin Digital Camera Link	B						
		Power Support Wheel Film	B						
Gravis G-Pod	B+	<b>FM Transmitters</b>				MacSkinz Podskinz	B		
Otterbox oPod	B+					SkinEFX iPod Stickers	C+		
iSkin eVo	B+					<b>Remotes</b>			
Matias iPod Armor	B+							Apple Remote (for Dock Connector iPods)	B+
Lajo eXo 2 Case	B+							Ten Technology naviPod	B
Teski Roadie Case	B+	<b>Speakers</b>							
Marware CEO Glove 3G	B+			JBL Creature II 2.1 System	A				
Eroch Studios Lilipod Waterproof Case	B+			Altec Lansing iMmini	A-				
Speck Products iSport	B+			JBL OnStage	B+				
Power Support Silicone Jacket Set	B			Altec Lansing iM3	B+				
Teski Executive Leather Case	B	Dr. Bott iPod Connection Kit w/ FM Trans.	C	Tivoli iPAL	B+				
Lajo eXo 3	B	Irock! Wireless Music Adapter	C	Altec Lansing inMotion	B				
RadTech PodSleevez	B	Sonnet Podfreq FM Transmitter	D+	Monster iSpeaker Portable	C-				
Incase Sleeve 3G Case	B	<b>Headphones &amp; In-earphones</b>		<b>Stands &amp; Cradles</b>					
Lajo eXo and eXo Inferno Cases	B								
Terforma iSleeve G2	B								
Monster iCase Travel Pack	B								
Piel Frama Leather Case	B								
Speck Products FlipStand 3G	B	Ultimate Ears UE5c Custom Earphones	A	Power Support Metal Gear Stand	A-				
iLeath Leather Print Case	B-	Etymotic Research ER-4S Earphones	A	Power Support Swivel Fix Stand	B+				
Speck Products iPod Skin	B-	Bose QuietComfort Aco. Noise Canceling	A	ModPod	B+				
MacAlly PodCase Armband	C+	Sennheiser MX500	A-	Apple Dock (for Dock Connector iPods)	B				
CaseClosed iPod Cases	C+	Sennheiser PMX60	A-	Pacific Rim Technologies iCradle	B				
JAVOedge Design 1	C	Ultimate Ears UE-10 Pro Earphones	A-	Bubble Design Habitat	B				
Tune Belt iPod Armband Carrier	C-	Sony MDR-E888LP Fontopia Earphones	A-	PodStand	B				
Monster iSportCase	D+	Sony Fontopia MDR-EX70/71LP	A-	PodHolder	B				
Proporta Aluminum iPod Case	D-	Shure E2c Earphones	B+	DVBaseLtd DVBase	B-				
<b>Cases - 1G &amp; 2G iPods (no Dock Connector)</b>		Future Sonics Ears Model EM3 Earphones	B+	Power Support Metal Gear Simple Stand	C+				
		Macally Noise Reduction Headphones	B	BookEndz iPodDock	C				
		Bluetake I-Phono BT420EX	B	iPodCradle	C				
		Sennheiser PX200	B						
		Shure E3c Earphones	B						
Apple iPod In-Ear Headphones	B								
Macally Retractable Headphones	C+								
Griffin EarJams	C+								
XtremeMac Deluxe (New & Improved)	A	HeadRoom iPod Earphone System	C						
MARWARE SportSuit Convertible	A	JAVOedge retractable earbuds	D						
Krusell Classic Case	A-								
iGlove Leather Case	A-								
XtremeMac Deluxe (Original)	A-								

iPodlounge spotlights new reviews on its main page several times each week, and provides an archive with comprehensive reviews for all of the products above on our Reviews page ([ipodlounge.com/reviews.php](http://ipodlounge.com/reviews.php)).



# A Brief History of iPod.

Our Features section begins with a quick look back at the past: key turning points in the making of the iPod dynasty.

## 2001



**January 9:** Apple introduces iTunes software for the Mac, which converts audio CDs into compressed digital audio files, organizes digital music libraries, and plays Internet radio.

**October 23:** Unexpectedly, Apple announces the first iPod at a price of \$399. Unlike most (but not all) competing digital audio players available at the time, Apple relies on a hard

disk for storage instead of flash memory or interchangeable CD-ROMs, and uniquely focuses on promoting the small size, power, and ease of use of its device. The first iPod has a 5 Gigabyte storage capacity - enough for over 1,000 songs - and works only on Macs, using iTunes to convert and organize music. Did Apple release iTunes with the

iPod in mind? According to an official Apple timeline, development of the iPod began only six months before its release.

**November 10:** Apple ships the first iPod.

**December 31:** By the end of 2001, Apple has sold a meager total of 125,000 iPods.

## 2002

**March 20:** Apple announces a 10 Gigabyte (2,000 song) update to the iPod for \$499. New iPods ship with the ability to display business card-like contact information, a feature co-opted from early third-party iPod software developers, and some begin to wonder about future PDA-like expansion of the iPod's abilities. At this time, the iPod is still a Mac-only product, though workaround programs that let iPods work with PCs begin to trickle out.

**July 17:** Four events, one day. First, PC-compatible iPods are unveiled, with MusicMatch software instead of iTunes. Second, a 20GB iPod is introduced. Third, 10GB and 20GB models now sport a new touch-sensitive Scroll Wheel instead of an actual moving wheel, which was easier to damage. And iPod prices are lowered, 5GB to \$299, 10GB to \$399, with the 20GB model at \$499. However, all the new iPods still connect only to computers with FireWire ports, which are far less common on PCs.



**December:** Apple unveils its first and only limited edition iPods, featuring the engraved signatures or

logos of Madonna, Tony Hawk, Beck, or No Doubt for an additional \$49. At a total price of \$548, these limited edition iPods were for some time the most expensive ever sold by Apple.

**October:** By this point, large retailers Best Buy, Dell, and Target have all started to sell iPods. Sensing the appeal of small high-capacity music players, Creative releases the Nomad Zen Jukebox as a cheaper (but still larger) competitor to the iPod.

## Evolution of the iPod

To date, Apple has introduced five major iterations of the iPod portable digital audio player platform, referred to as the first-generation (1G) through fourth-generation (4G) iPods, and iPod mini. While the 1G and 2G iPods featured a FireWire data port next to the top headphone port and hold switch, it was removed from the top of all later iPods in favor of a bottom-mounted Dock Connector port with USB and FireWire cables.

Button placement also changed; the original collection of four buttons surrounded the 1G and 2G iPods' Scroll Wheels in a concentric circle, but were transformed into round buttons above the Scroll Wheel for the 3G iPod, and then integrated into the face of the Click Wheels of the iPod mini and 4G iPod.

Finally, the wheel itself has changed. The 1G iPod used a wheel that physically moved, but each subsequent iPod has used a touch-sensitive, non-moving surface that emulates a wheel's movement - a subtle, yet unquestionably superior design.



## 2003

**March:** Microsoft announces development of a new hardware and software platform called Media2Go, which combines portable video and audio playback in a single device. Originally targeted for a holiday 2003 release, the devices are eventually renamed Windows Portable Media Centers, then renamed just Portable Media Centers (PMCs), and delayed until late 2004. Microsoft hints that they're the company's "iPod killer."



**April 28:** Huge news: Apple unveils the "third-generation" iPod. The new iPods are even thinner and smaller than before, feature a bottom Dock Connector port rather than a top-mounted FireWire port, and have entirely touch sensitive controls. The new iPods have higher capacities than 2G iPods offered for the same prices: now 10GB (2,000 songs) is \$299, 15GB (3,700 songs) is \$399 and 30GB (7,500 songs) is \$499. All the new iPods now work on either Macs or PCs.

Apple also launches the iTunes Music Store with 99 cent per track (\$9.99 per album) pricing and a library of 200,000 songs. Unfortunately, neither iTunes nor the music store is available for PC users, who are becoming a larger part of Apple's business.

## Early 2004

**January 6:** Apple debuts the iPod mini, a diminutive 4GB version of the iPod available in five colors at \$249. Despite an impressive simplifying redesign of the iPod's control scheme and casing, critical opinion of the device is initially mixed because of price and capacity concerns. Apple simultaneously replaces the \$299 10GB entry-level iPod with a 15GB model, and retailers almost immediately discount the discontinued 10GB model to \$249, further clouding the value equation.



Apple also announces the sale of the two millionth iPod, less than six months after hitting the one million mark.

**January 8:** Out of nowhere, PC heavyweight Hewlett-Packard announces at the Las Vegas Consumer Electronics Show that it will license the iPod from Apple rather than compete. HP promises to release and sell a "HP blue"-colored iPod by Summer, and agrees to market iTunes to its PC customers almost immediately.

**February 17-20:** Apple ships its first iPod minis, and long lines form at stores for its official Friday on-sale date. Sell-outs and near-sell-outs are reported nationwide, and critical opinion quickly turns in the device's favor.

**March 25:** Apple pushes back the international release of the iPod mini from April to July, citing "much stronger than expected demand" from U.S. customers. Analysts report shortages of the miniature hard drives required by Apple.

**May 1-4:** Retailers begin to sell third-generation iPods, and only one week after launching the Mac iTunes Music Store, Apple has sold 1,000,000 songs.

**June 19:** Apple finally releases USB 2.0-compatible cables and drivers for 3G iPods, expanding the range of iPod-friendly PCs.

**June 23:** Apple sells the one millionth iPod, more than a year and a half after releasing the device.

**September 8:** Apple refreshes the middle and top of the 3G iPod line with higher storage capacities at familiar pricing. A 20GB (5,000 song) model replaces the 15GB version at \$399, and a 40GB (10,000 song) model replaces the 30GB version for \$499. Sales continue to be brisk.

**October 16:** Apple releases both iTunes and the iTunes Music Store (iTMS) for U.S.-based PC users, phasing out support for the less popular MusicMatch PC software in the process.



Belkin and Apple jointly announce voice recording and digital photo storage peripherals for the iPod, further and more tangibly expanding the device's capabilities past music playback. Apple also announces total iTMS sales of 13,000,000 songs.

## Packaging and Pack-ins



Most people focus on prices and Gigabytes, but an iPod's pack-ins can add considerable value for the dollar.

The original (1G) iPod included headphones, a FireWire cable, iTunes software, and an AC adapter, while the 2G iPod came in different flavors. A 5GB Mac version was the same as above, but the PC version included a 4-pin to 6-pin FireWire adapter, and MusicMatch software instead of iTunes. The 10GB and 20GB Versions also included an iPod Remote and iPod Carrying Case.

Then the 3G iPod arrived. The 10GB (\$299) package included slightly new headphones, an AC adapter, a Dock Connector to FireWire cable, a 4-pin to 6-pin FireWire adapter, iTunes software for Mac and MusicMatch software for PC. More expensive 15GB and 30GB (\$399-499) packages included a Dock, a new Remote Control, and new Carrying Case. Later 15GB, 20GB and 40GB iPods included Mac and PC iTunes, though the \$299 15GB iPod did not include a Dock, Remote Control or Carrying Case.

Apple's iPod mini package was the first to include cables for both USB and FireWire connections. It also includes headphones, a plastic Belt Clip, AC adapter, and iTunes software for Macs and PCs.

Two versions of the 4G iPod package exist, both significantly stripped in pack-ins. The 20GB model includes USB and FireWire cables, headphones, an AC adapter, and iTunes, while the 40GB version also includes a Dock. Neither includes a Remote. The iPod Photo has 3G-like pack-ins, plus a new AV cable and Photo Dock.



Mid-2004 to Today

**May 5:** Apple announces the sale of the three millionth iPod, only four months after hitting the two million mark. Analysts widely acknowledge the iPod as the digital audio market's dominant hardware format, and make fewer positive references to cheaper competitors.

**June 15:** Apple releases the iTunes Music Store in three European markets: France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. U.K. media outlets complain that Apple doesn't have enough local independent music in the catalog. One week later, 800,000 songs have been sold to European customers, 450,000 in the UK alone.

**July 11-12:** The iTunes Music Store sells its 100,000,000th downloaded song at around 1:25AM Eastern Standard Time, July 12 (or 10:25PM Pacific Standard Time, July 11), the first legal music download service to hit that milestone. Thanks to an Apple contest offering a 17" PowerBook laptop computer, 40GB iPod, and iTunes gift certificate for 10,000 songs (total estimated value: \$13,200) to the person who purchased the 100,000,000th song, around 40,000 songs (total estimated value: \$39,600) were sold in just the ten minutes before the milestone was reached.

**July 17-20:** Leaked before the official announcement, the fourth-generation iPod debuts online on the 17th. Boasting improved battery life (12 hours), iPod mini-style Click Wheel controls and thinner bodies, the 4G iPods generate considerable buzz and ship by the 20th. Called lower-cost iPods, prices for the new low-end (20GB, \$299) and mid-range (40GB, \$399) units look good until consumers discover that numerous pack-ins (Docks, remote controls, and cases) have been stripped from the new iPods' packages.



**July 21:** Apple adds three top European independent labels to the iTunes catalog, placating the few remaining critics of iTunes.

**July 24:** Apple releases the iPod mini worldwide.

**July 26:** Motorola announces that its next generation of cell phones will be iTunes-compatible. RealNetworks releases Harmony, enabling songs sold by Real to be played back on iPods without Apple's permission.



**August 5:** Apple announces total sales of 3.7 million iPods.

**August 10:** The iTunes Music Store library hits 1,000,000 songs.

**August 25:** Apple quietly begins to search for wireless and video experts to join its iPod division.

**August 27:** Hewlett-Packard announces the "Apple iPod from HP" (or "iPod+hp"), a repackaged version of the 4G iPod with new manuals and HP-supplied technical support. Promising availability by September 15, HP begins to ship units almost immediately, and announces an iPod-compatible printer and "printable tattoos" to cover iPods.

**August 31:** Apple announces that it has 58% market share of the U.S. digital music player business, and plans a pan-European iTunes for October.

**September 1:** iTunes hits 125 million downloaded songs. Apple starts to market the iMac G5 computer as "from the creators of iPod."

**September 7 - October 4:** Microsoft's unofficial anti-iPod public relations offensive starts. Chairman Bill Gates says in an interview that the iPod would have been easy for Microsoft to make. Next, while Internet-based viruses plague Windows PCs, Microsoft announces that the next Windows version will prevent iPods from unleashing viruses on PCs, though no such iPod attack has been reported. Finally, CEO Steve Ballmer publicly calls iPod users music thieves, claiming that Microsoft offers better copy protection. He later apologizes.

**October 12-14:** Analysts report that iPod sales are 82% of all digital music players and 92% of all hard-drive based players; nearest hard drive competitor Creative has 3.7%. Over 2,000,000 iPods were shipped in the prior 3 months alone, and iTunes downloads hit 150,000,000, a rate of 4 million downloads per week.

**October 26:** Apple debuts the iPod Photo (\$599-\$699) and U2 iPod (\$349), noting sales of 6 million iPods to date.

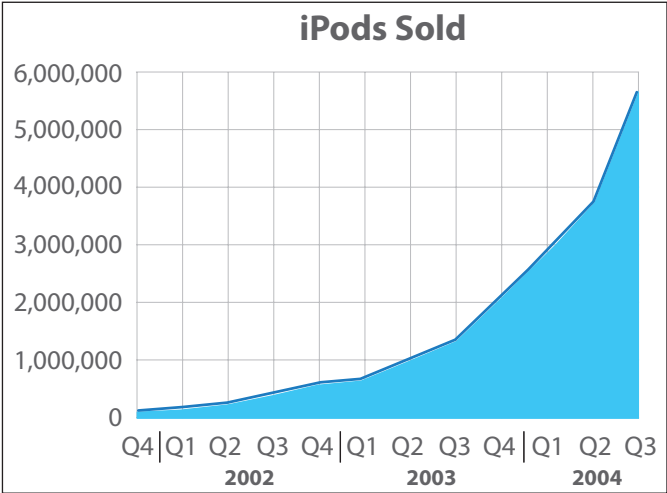


Sales of the iPod, 2001-2004

iPod sales increased steadily after the May 2003 release of the third-generation iPod. Prior to that point, Apple had focused on Macintosh users, and released the iPod without USB support - an necessity if Apple wanted to win over mainstream PC users.

It took over a year and a half for Apple to hit the one million mark for iPods sold, but in January 2004, only six months after the Tokyo, Japan debut of the 3G iPod, the company had sold its second million units. Four months later (May 2004), aided by the release of the iPod mini, they'd sold another million iPods, and by August, 2004 they'd sold another million. Three months later, two million more.

All this, despite constant criticism from naysayers and competition from both bigger names and cheaper alternatives. Go, go, iPod!



Oprah's \$140k of iPods

In 2003, Oprah Winfrey named the iPod one of "Oprah's Favorite Things" as part of her series of product giveaway shows, and gave 15GB (\$399) iPods to each member of her 350-person studio audience. But billionaire Oprah didn't have to drop \$140,000 of her own cash for the iPods: Apple donated them, and Oprah didn't even know how to use one when it was on the show. (She can afford to pay an employee to program her playlists.)



Musicians Love iPods

And Apple loves musicians. The company briefly released a series of iPod boxes featuring the images of Jimi Hendrix, Miles Davis, Bob Marley and Billie Holiday, has had several artists create engraved signature iPods, and included performers such as Alicia Keys in unveilings. Rapper 50 Cent held an iPod in the video for P.I.M.P.. And Apple currently runs TV spots featuring U2 and the iTunes-exclusive song Vertigo, say nothing of their partnership for the U2 iPod.

Most Expensive iPods



Prior to the iPod Photo, the most expensive iPods sold by Apple were \$548 limited editions laser-engraved with the buyer's choice of four names: the signatures of musicians Beck or Madonna, the logo of band No Doubt, or the signature of pro skateboarder Tony Hawk. Rap tycoon Sean "P. Diddy" Combs' diamond-encrusted iPod+hp (\$16,000) is shown at left, and below accompanied by bling bling inMotion speakers.



High-Profile iPod Trivia

Sales figures alone don't come close to telling the iPod story: Apple has a bona-fide cultural phenomenon on its hands. Beloved by music fans and musicians alike, the iPod has become the luxury gift of choice, a product only attacked by its competitors and those who see the potential for lawsuit-related dollars from Apple. Here, we spotlight some of the iPod's key supporters and detractors.

iPod-Related Legal Issues

Everyone guns for #1. French authorities pushed Apple to withdraw the iPod from France until its volume was lowered to meet E.U. decibel standards. Canada sought to impose a \$315-840 tax per iPod based on an outdated regulation, but settled on \$25.

And then there are the private lawsuits. Apple Computer was sued in the U.K. by Apple Corps, holder of The Beatles rights, allegedly for violating an earlier agreement in which Apple Computer agreed not to enter the music business. In the U.S., Apple was sued by Eminem for using his song Lose Yourself in iPod ads without the rights. We'll skip over the class action battery suits for now.





# iPodlounge Backstage

## The Editors' Blog

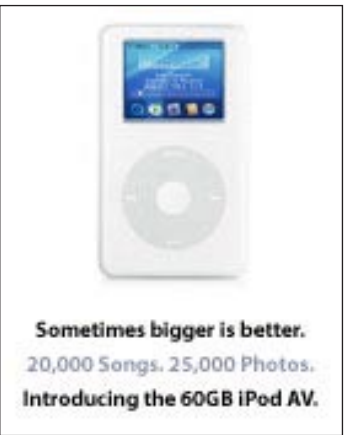
Launched in July of 2004, iPodlounge Backstage is the first page that hard core iPodlounge readers check for behind-the-scenes and early details on iPodlounge stories. Billed as the combined blog of iPodlounge's editors, Backstage includes advance information on upcoming reviews, features, and site news of potential interest to iPodlounge readers. It also includes tangential pieces vaguely related to official iPodlounge stories.

### Who We Are, and What We Love



With so many web sites and technology publications floating around in the marketplace, iPodlounge stands out for several unique reasons - one is its emphasis on people, both on the editorial and community sides of the site. iPodlounge's Editors are more than just guys who love music and gadgets, and iPodlounge Backstage is more than occasionally a place where the Editors can drop the site's formalities and talk to readers as themselves.

### October's Top Story: Rumors of a Color iPod



Though iPodlounge does not permit rumors to appear in the site's news pages unless they've been reported in the mass-media, we occasionally address intriguing reports in Backstage - where we can make very clear that we're not discussing news, only idle speculation.

Early October saw the return of a several-month-old story that Apple would release a color, 60-Gigabyte version of the iPod just in time for the holidays, featuring the ability to display digital photographs and album art on its screen. According to the rumor, Apple would advertise the device as possessing a 20,000 song, 25,000 picture capacity. As with many rumors, though the details weren't accurate in all the particulars, they eventually proved close enough to the truth.

In keeping with the rumor, iPodlounge produced the depicted mock-up graphic, which quickly spread to other sites. Prior iPodlounge and iPodlounge Gallery graphic concepts and slogans (most recently, "The iPod. Remixed.") have found their way into official Apple iPod advertising, so we (and our readers) keep churning them out for fun.

### Just for Fun: The Dogs of iPodlounge



iPodlounge Publisher Dennis Lloyd started the trend by blogging about his dog Rocket ("the official iPodlounge mascot"), a massive Labrador Retriever who could swallow iPods whole if given the chance.

Then Senior Editor Jeremy Horwitz continued the trend by bringing home a three-month-old Siberian Husky puppy named Sake (pronounced Sah-kay, like the Japanese wine), now deemed "the iPodlounge Husky".

Neither dog has actually used an iPod with earbuds yet, but one of them has bitten through an iPod accessory (the iPod mini lanyard from STM's Cocoon) during an attempted iPod-dog photo shoot. Sake was brought home to the sounds of an iPod playing Fantasia Barrino's first EP, and he whimpered until the music was turned off.

We don't really think that the majority of our readers care about our dogs - hence, this winds up on Backstage instead of the main iPodlounge web site - but we occasionally like to share little snippets of what we're doing when we aren't writing about iPods.

### Editorializing on Pet Peeves: Microsoft and Sony



Most of the time, iPodlounge just laughs at Microsoft and Sony's weak attempts to slag the iPod, but once in a while, we discuss recent news developments relating to proposed "iPod killers." Sony's PlayStation

Portable (PSP), once touted as "the Walkman of the 21st Century," was embarrassingly compelled to do an eleventh-hour price cut for Japanese launch when its launch library and features failed to blow away analysts.

### September's Top Story: Danger's Sidekick II

iPod competitors are a dime a dozen, but digital devices that complement the iPod are few and far between. That's why we jumped at the chance to review Danger and T-Mobile's Sidekick II, a brilliant hybrid of GSM wireless phone, e-mail device, web browser, and AOL Instant Messenger client.

And review it we did - twice. In keeping with iPodlounge traditions, we released comprehensive, world exclusive New Users' and Power Users' reviews of the device, complete with an extensive photo gallery and ten days of hands-on testing. Our findings? The Sidekick II has the potential to be the iPod of the dataphone world - no surprise, given that Danger's staff includes former Apple Computer employees. Even after returning our review unit to Danger, we now use two on a daily basis, and can't remember what life was like without them. Remind you of anything small, white, and musical you've purchased lately?



### What's Next for Backstage?

In theory, anything could appear on iPodlounge Backstage, and if something's of interest to iPodlounge's editors, it will. We routinely use the space to provide first mentions of new iPod accessories we've received - before we've even had a chance to test them - and we try to respond to the comment and discussion threads attached to Backstage. Sometimes we'll even hide an interesting nugget of information in our comments, just for kicks.

As this issue goes to press, the following items are in the iPodlounge review queue - which we attempt to update on the site on a weekly or more frequent basis:

- Battery Technology Incorporated's iPod Auto/Air Charger
- Bose SoundDock
- Contour Design iSee-20 and iSee-mini
- DLO Jam Jacket and Jam Jacket Pro 4G
- Elecom ASP-700i iPod-Matching Speaker System
- Griffin iBeam
- Marware C.E.O. Classic 4G
- Marware MetroVue
- Marware Santa
- Marware SportSuit 4G
- Marware Trailvue
- Newer Technology Replacement Batteries
- Newer Technology RoadTrip! 107.7
- Power Support Crystal Jacket 4G
- Tekkeon myPower MP1100

iPodlounge  
backstage  
behind the scenes

Like all other sections of iPodlounge, Backstage is open to readers' requests and suggestions. If you think you have the next great idea, post it to [backstage.ipodlounge.com](http://backstage.ipodlounge.com)!

myPower™ MP1100

\$89.95

32 hours playback time!

The All in One Rechargeable Battery and Dock

[www.tekkeon.com](http://www.tekkeon.com) Tekkeon



# iPods Around the World Galleries



San Francisco Bay Bridge, California



Juiz de Fora, MG, Brazil



Machu Picchu, Peru

Of the over 4,000 photographs in iPodlounge's Photo Galleries, nearly 3,000 are found in our famous iPods Around the World gallery. With pictures from all seven continents, this gallery has itself earned praise from magazines around the world; authorized reprints have appeared in publications throughout Europe and Asia.

## North and South America



Crown Fountain, Millennium Park, Chicago, Illinois



Chichen-Itza, Mexico



CN Tower, Toronto, Ontario, Canada



Beijing, China



iPod Monk, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

## Asia and Australia



Tin Shui Wai Park, Hong Kong



Deoksugung, South Korea



Opera House and Harbour Bridge, Sydney, Australia



Kamakura, Tokyo, Japan

## iPods at the Bottom of the World



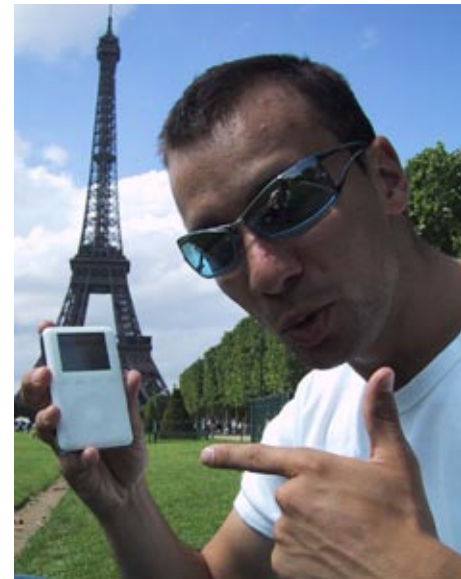
Of the 2,800 photographs in the iPods Around the World gallery, one of the most memorable was submitted by Scott Holbrook, who appears here with an Apple iPod at 90 South, "the Bottom of the World."

The Ceremonial South Pole at Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station is located in Antarctica, and Scott's shot completed

iPodlounge's goal of having photos of iPods taken over all seven continents. You can guess why this one was the toughest.

Up next: iPods in every country around the world.





Eiffel Tower, Paris, France

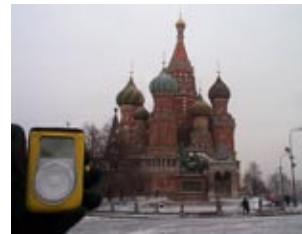
## Europe



Brandenburg Gate, Berlin, Germany



Big Ben, London, England



Kremlin, Moscow, Russia



Swiss Mountains, Switzerland



Schifling, Carinthia, Austria



Venice, Italy



Saddam Palace, Baghdad, Iraq



Sphinx, Egypt



Kuwait Water Towers



Massi Mara Desert, Kenya, Africa

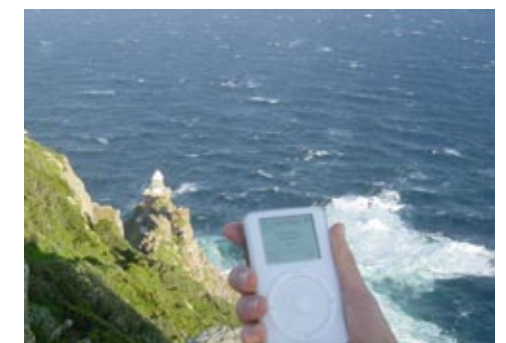


Dune 45, Namibia, Africa

## Middle East and Africa



Undisclosed Location, Middle East



Cape of Good Hope, Capetown, South Africa



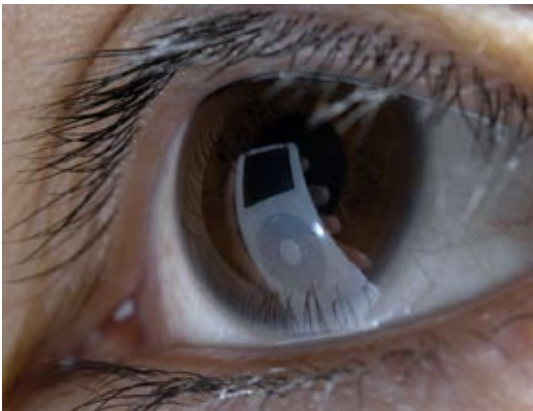
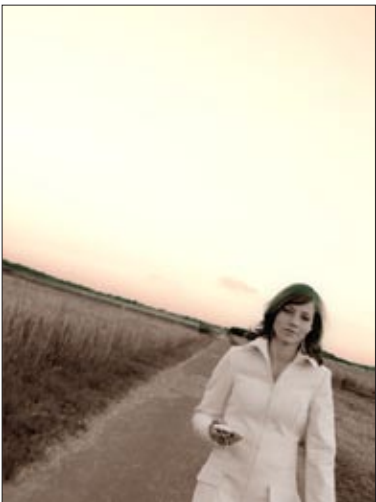
Western Wall, Jerusalem, Israel





iPod Style Gallery

As one of iPodlounge's newest galleries, iPod Style challenges submitters to create fashionable, stylish or sexy photographs of people with iPods. These are some of our favorite entries to date.



iPod Concepts

As the home of iPod concept photographs that have been reprinted with permission in publications such as Wired, iPod Concepts is a place for iPodloungeurs to render and display their dreams of future iPod and iPodesque devices.

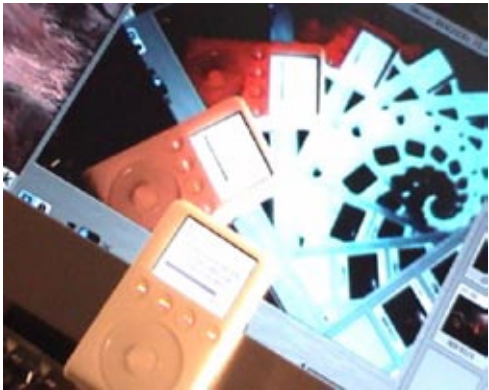






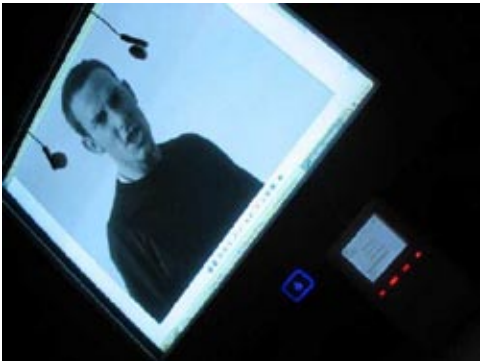
### iPod Art

The iPod Art gallery gives iPodloungeurs a place to blend photography, original artwork, and 3-D computer rendering in a single place, often with beautiful or just plain weird results. Some of the more memorable recent entries appear here.



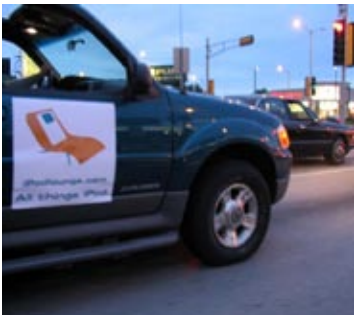
### Me and My iPod

Me and My iPod is a place for people-and-iPod photographs of any stripe - serious, humorous, or something in-between. Started before iPod Style, Me and My iPod was the inspiration for the latter gallery, with more restrictive rules. These are some of our favorite entries, featuring all sorts of ideas.



### Promote iPodlounge

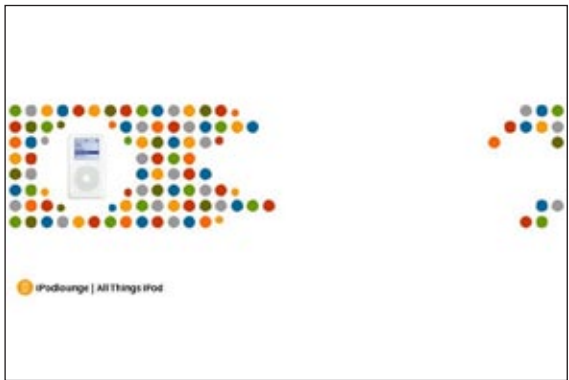
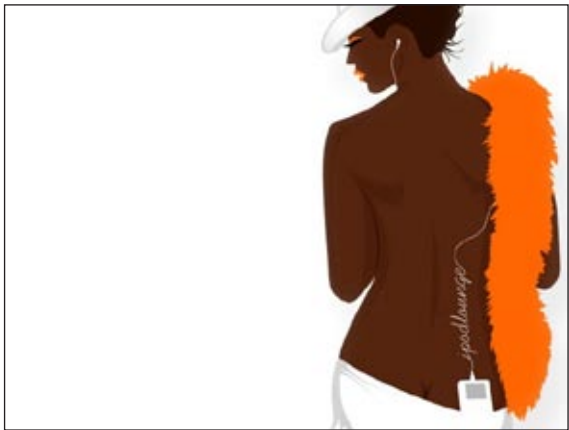
This small gallery is devoted to photographs taken by people who have tried to promote and support iPodlounge in their local communities. One person drove with an iPodlounge banner on his car for a week; another passed out leaflets on the streets of Dusseldorf, Germany. Our readers are great.





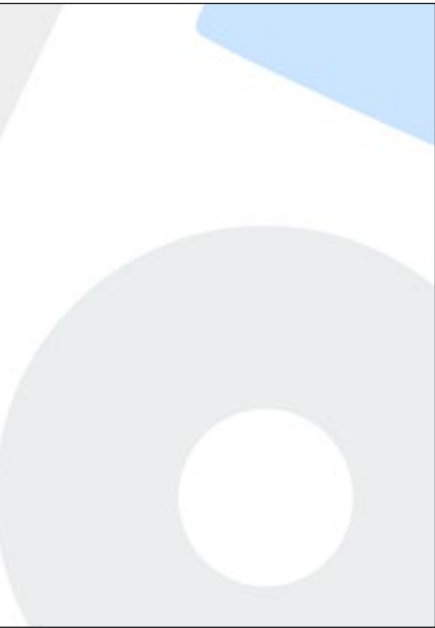
# iPod Desktops

The new iPod Desktops gallery is a place for users to submit their iPod- and iPodlounge-themed art and pictures that have been formatted to work as PC and Macintosh desktop backgrounds.



# iPodlounge Buyers' Guide Cover Contest Best Submissions

In announcing this Buyers' Guide, iPodlounge sponsored a contest to let readers create the issue's cover. You've seen the winning entry already; the entries on this page were some of our other favorites.



**Second Place Winner (above)**  
Bill Holt of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada





# iPod 101

## Importing Windows Media Audio (WMA) into iTunes

The iPod could hardly be easier to use. But Apple's free music management program iTunes occasionally confuses or stumps even experienced digital music lovers.

In iPodlounge's ten-part series iPod 101, we use step-by-step pictorial guides to demystify ten of iTunes' most useful features. You can read the rest of the iPod 101 series on iPodlounge.com.

If you have an iPod and a library full of music in Microsoft's Windows Media Audio (WMA) format, good news: there's an easy way to convert that music into iPod-friendly MP3 or AAC files. If you have iTunes and a PC, you won't even need another program to do the conversion.

There's only one caveat: iTunes can only convert unprotected WMA files, such as ones that you created yourself by converting your CD library into Windows Media format. By contrast, WMA files legally downloaded from companies such as Real, Napster, and MusicMatch can't be converted by iTunes, so you'll need to use one of the alternative methods explained in the full iPodlounge.com version of this article.

After loading iTunes, adding and converting unprotected WMA files to your library is nearly identical to adding MP3 or AAC files. The process takes two steps: set up iTunes' Importing preferences, and add the files to your iTunes library. iTunes will automatically convert the WMA audio for you.

First, go to iTunes' Importing preferences menu and select AAC or MP3 format. AAC files consume less space but will only play on iPods and iTunes-equipped computers. MP3s are larger but more compatible. Then specify the quality settings you prefer. Start by testing a few files first through earphones, and don't use a bitrate much greater than that of your original WMA audio files: you'll use more space and get little benefit. (For more guidance, see iPod 101: How to Import CD Tracks to iTunes.)

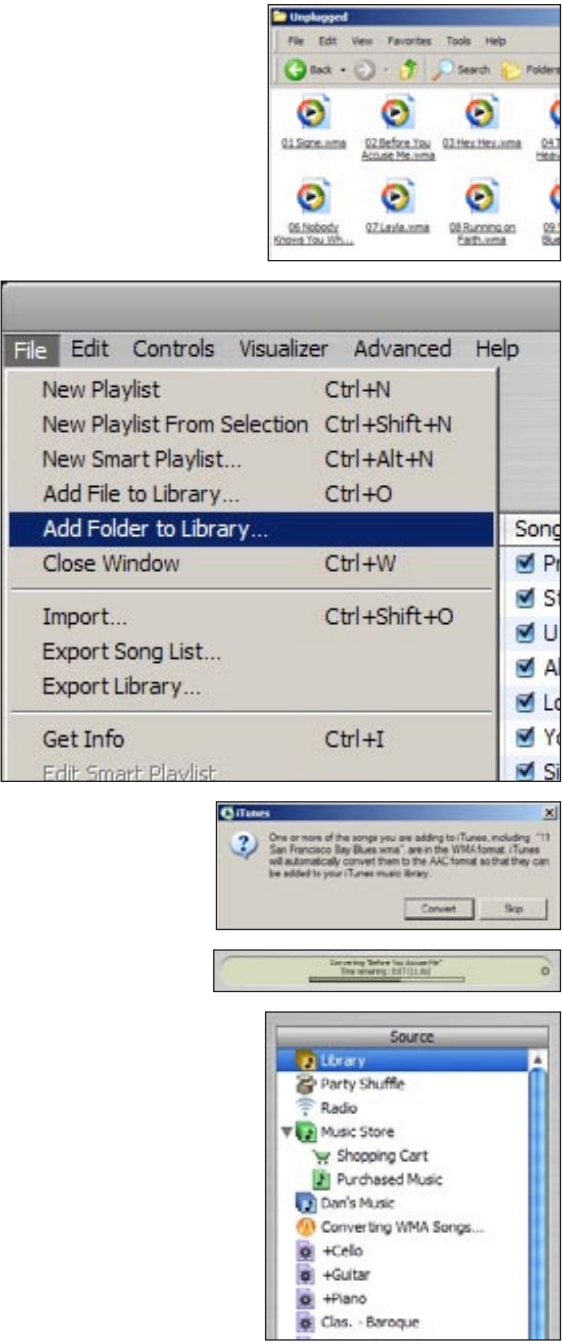
Next, locate the WMA files on your PC. Begin with your "My Music" folder, contained within "My Documents." If not, load Windows Media Player, right-click any file in your "Media Library", then select "Properties." Once you've located your WMA files, you can proceed to add your WMA files to your iTunes library in one of two ways:

**Drag and Drop:** Navigate to the items you'd like to add to iTunes in Windows Explorer, select them, and drag them into the iTunes Library window or on top of the "Library" icon in iTunes' Source column. This works with individual WMA files, multiple WMA files, and folders containing WMA Files.

**Use the Menus:** If you prefer the iTunes menu, choose either "Add File to Library..." or "Add Folder to Library..." from the File menu. Select the files or folders you'd like to add, and click OK.

Then click "Convert" and iTunes will begin the conversion process. That's all you have to do - pretty easy, right? You can monitor iTunes' conversion progress throughout each individual song in the Status window at the top of iTunes, and see how the whole collection is converting under "Source."

The iTunes conversion process makes copies of your music, leaving behind the WMA Audio, which you can preserve or delete as you prefer. When the conversion has finished, you will most likely want to delete your original WMA audio files to save hard drive space. The iTunes conversion process makes copies of your music, leaving behind the WMA Audio.



# iPod 201

## Transferring music from your iPod back to your computer

While iPod 101 offers guidance on iTunes, our new iPod 201 series explores more advanced topics, including subjects that our readers frequently raise for discussion and assistance.

Because Apple hasn't included this feature in iTunes, this tutorial is the most anticipated and requested in iPodlounge's history: how to move music off of an iPod and back on to your computer.

Most likely because of concerns over piracy, iTunes makes it easy to transfer music from a computer to an iPod, though not the other way around. But there are legitimate and legal reasons a person would want to transfer audio from the iPod to a computer: desktop hard drive failure, the purchase of a new/replacement computer, distribution of iTunes Music Store downloads to your five legally authorized computers, and so on.

While there are many third-party programs that perform iPod-to-computer transfers, virtually all of them found in iPodlounge.com's Downloads section, we'll mention only three popular ones here. For the PC, there's iPodAgent, a free program with many options in addition to the music copying feature. For the Mac, there's iPodRip, a \$10 Shareware option with a nice interface and iTunes playlist regeneration. And for both platforms, there's PodUtil, a £10 Shareware program which offers powerful copy features and iTunes playlist regeneration. Since PodUtil's interface and features are identical on both platforms, we'll show you how it works.

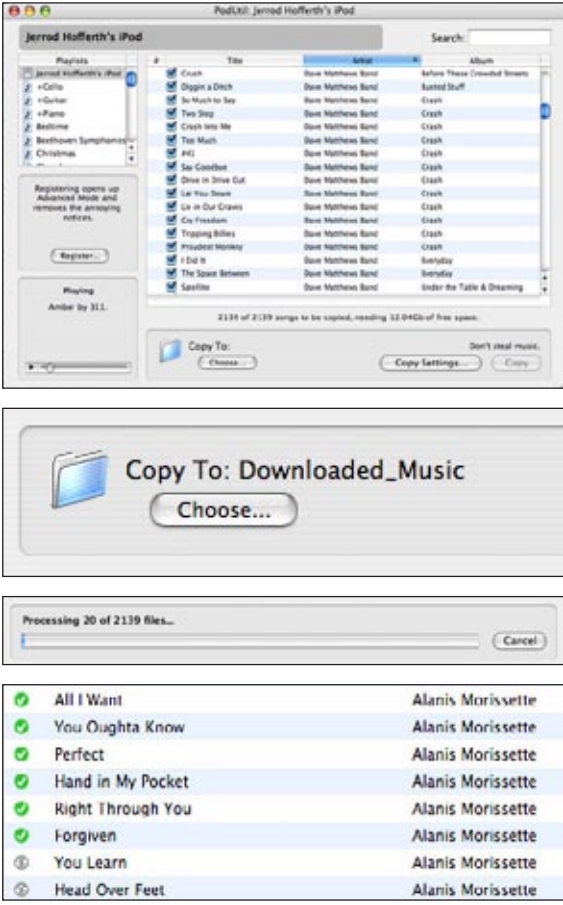
Start on the computer you want to use as an iPod receiving station, and make sure iTunes is installed. Then download PodUtil from the link found at [http://www.ipodlounge.com/downloads\\_list.php](http://www.ipodlounge.com/downloads_list.php), and install it on the computer. Next, connect your iPod to your computer using USB2.0 or Firewire. Whatever you do, CLICK NO if and when iTunes asks you whether you want to delete the content on your iPod. And ensure that "Enable Disk Use" is selected for your iPod in the iTunes iPod Settings window.

Now launch PodUtil. PodUtil will detect your iPod, examine its database, and display a list of all of your tracks in the main window, with a listing of your playlists on the left. In this window, you can search for tracks (in the top right corner) or preview them straight off of the iPod by double clicking on one.

To prepare for the music copying process, you'll need to make a few choices. At the bottom of the main PodUtil window, pick the computer directory where PodUtil should dump iPod music. Then, at the bottom right of the main window, hit the "Copy Settings" button. PodUtil can create separate subdirectories for each Artist and Album in your collection if you select these two options. If you turn on the additional iTunes features, PodUtil will automatically add the copied songs to your library and recreate your iTunes playlists -- two helpful features when restoring lost libraries.

Next, de-select the songs (either in the main track list or in individual playlists) that you don't want to transfer to the computer. When only the correct tracks are selected, click "Copy" in the bottom right of the main window to begin the process!

When the upload is complete, you'll have a directory (or, if you selected the appropriate options, an iTunes Library) full of your iPod music. With only a few button clicks, you have now transferred your iPod's entire music library to your computer. This little program - and others like it- take a painstakingly complex process and reduce it to a few easy button clicks. Now if only Apple would include the same feature in iTunes...



### Other iPod 101/201 Articles on iPodlounge.com

- 101 | How to Import CD Tracks to iTunes
- 101 | How to Create Playlists in iTunes
- 101 | How to Create Smart Playlists in iTunes
- 101 | How to Burn a CD in iTunes
- 101 | Tagging Songs in iTunes
- 101 | Adding Album Art in iTunes
- 101 | Printing CD Covers and Lists in iTunes
- 101 | Using Party Shuffle in iTunes
- 101 | Using the iTunes Music Store
- 201 | iPod Synchronization
- 201 | Using Your iPod as a Hard Drive
- 201 | Moving Your iTunes Library to a New Drive



**Help! at iPodlounge.** Every new iPod owner needs help with something - or many things. This is the place on iPodlounge.com where you can find the answers to your questions, for free.

iPodlounge FAQs

Compiled over the course of more than three years and updated recently, iPodlounge's Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) deal with the most common minor issues raised by iPod owners and fans. We've included representative questions and answers from each of the FAQs' five sections.

iPod General

Q: Are there any differences between the HP iPod and Apple's most recent (4G) iPod?

A: The Apple iPod and the HP iPod are the same as far as function and appearance. The only differences are that the HP iPod comes pre-formatted to work on Windows and includes a Windows installation CD, the HP logo appears on the back of the HP iPod, and the box is blue and white with "iPod+hp" and a "people photo" on it.

iPod Usage

Q: My iPod is frozen on the playback screen! Or, my iPod will not turn on or respond! What do I do?

A: Press the "Play/Pause" and the "Menu" buttons together and hold them in for about 5 to 10 seconds - until the Apple logo appears. This will reset (reboot) your iPod. On older iPods, this may also reset your clock, but this won't happen on any of Apple's current models.**iPod Mac**

Q: My iPod does not show up as an icon in Finder or on my Mac's desktop. How can I use it as an external FireWire drive?

A: Select "Enable FireWire disk use" in iPod Preferences in iTunes. This option is off by default. Connect your iPod to your Mac, then start iTunes. Select your iPod in the source list on the left and click the iPod icon in the lower right corner of the screen.

iPod Windows

Q: When running the iPod Software Updater program, the Updater progresses to just about the end, then I receive a Can't Unmount iPod error. What should I do?

A: This is usually caused by some other program accessing the iPod drive. Try to shut down any programs that could be accessing the iPod, such as anti-virus programs. But sometimes even that won't do it.

But there's still hope. When the error appears, it is OK to disconnect the iPod from the computer. The iPod will then flash an icon indicating that you should connect the iPod to your computer. Make sure that your cable supplies power to the iPod, as it needs external power to finish the Restore/Update process. A progress bar will appear on the iPod and when done the Updater program will indicate that the Restore has succeeded.

Service | Repair | Warranty

Q: How much does it cost to repair an out-of-warranty iPod?

A: Out-of-warranty repair pricing is \$249.00 for replacement: labor, parts, and a 90-day guarantee on materials and workmanship and \$6.95 for shipping.

Tips and Tricks

Sometimes goofy but often interesting, the Tips and Tricks page of iPodlounge features twenty little bits of information that can help you hack or squeeze the most out of your iPod. Visit the full page full of How-To guides at [www.ipodlounge.com/tips.php](http://www.ipodlounge.com/tips.php).

- 1. How to set up your iPod to put you to sleep
- 2. How to keep songs in your library (and therefore on your iPod) but not on your harddrive
- 3. How to copy songs from iPod to your PC
- 4. How to open an iPod without scratching it
- 5. How to copy music files from iPod to PC using Musicmatch
- 6. How to access your hidden music files on iPod (Mac)
- 7. How to resume playing a song with manual shutoff
- 8. How to copy your hidden or music files from iPod to Mac
- 9. How to scan your iPod's hard disk drive
- 10. How to use iTunes to play your iPod "through" a second Macintosh
- 11. How to disassemble and clean your iPod's mechanical Scroll Wheel
- 12. How to remove scratches and polish your iPod
- 13. How to set up your iPod to "scrub" a song
- 14. How to set the volume levels for your MP3s
- 15. How to set up your iPod to resume audiobook playback

- 16. How to access the hidden Break-out game (old iPods only)
- 17. How to reset your iPod
- 18. How to make songs appear at the top of your "Artists" list on your iPod
- 19. How to initiate the iPod's Diagnostic Mode
- 20. How to connect your iPod to a non-powered FireWire PCI card

Battery Advice

Apple squelched most of the controversy over iPod battery life by releasing the iPod Photo (rated for 15 hours playback), fourth-generation iPod (rated for 12 hours of playback) and iPod mini (which exceeds its 8 hour rating), but owners of older iPods still have questions as to the playback time and lifespan of their batteries. That's why we've included a direct link to our official battery discussion thread from iPodlounge's Navigation Bar.

Currently at 13 pages in length, iPodlounge's official battery thread includes answers to virtually every question you might have about an iPod's battery. Topics ranging from performance tests to replacement options and comparisons between various generations of iPod hardware are examined.

Official Apple Links

If all else fails, contact Apple. We say that only half-jokingly, as the company now offers only a single telephone support call per customer per iPod. But Apple does have a sizeable database of online support documents, and iPodlounge has a map to the best of them.

Visit iPodlounge's Apple Links page at [www.ipodlounge.com/links.php](http://www.ipodlounge.com/links.php) for easy access to Apple's download pages for iPod manuals, the company's official FAQs, and a search form to find whatever you need at the company's official web site. Though not as comprehensive as what you will find by searching iPodlounge's forums and main site, many obscure questions and issues have been documented by Apple, so their pages are worth a look.

iPodlounge's Apple Links page also includes links to Apple's historic software updates for the iPod, plus official tips on how to use the iPod, iPod mini, and iTunes. Historians interested in the evolution of the iPod may find the links to be amusing - or enlightening.

Still need help? Your next step should be a search of the iPodlounge Discussion Forums (old and new), which feature years' worth of questions and answers from iPod users just like you. If you can't find the answer after a search, post your question, and you can be sure that someone will answer it in short order. The friendly iPodlounge forum community (next page) helped us make Time Magazine's 2004 list of 50 best web sites.



As the iPod has evolved, so has our protection for it.

iPod cocoon-engineered for the 4th generation iPod and the iPod Photo

[www.stmbags.com](http://www.stmbags.com)



Joining the Discussion Forums. An iPod's more than a device - it's an invitation to join a friendly and growing community. See why over 33,000 registered users call iPodlounge's forums their home.

Registration: Required Information All fields are required. Please note that passwords are case sensitive.

User Name:

iPi User 350001

Password:

\*\*\*\*\*

Enter Password Again:

\*\*\*\*\*

Email:

Please enter a valid email address. You can choose to hide it below in the preferences section.

350001@ipodlounge.com

Enter Email Again:

350001@ipodlounge.com

Joining the iPodlounge forums couldn't be easier, and of course, registration is free. You create a unique user name and an iPodlounge forums password, entered twice for combination. We don't request any personal information from our users, except for a valid e-mail address. Some users choose to add details and graphics to customize their accounts, as illustrated below.

MadPict

Administrator

Registered: Feb 2002

Location: "Silicon Fen", UK

Posts: 4330

Bob(MadPict)

Podlounge Admin & Contributing Editor

46-48GB

16-56GB

Shure E2

Photo (optional)

Contributing Editor & Forum Moderator

iPodlounge

HOME | USER CP | REGISTER | CALENDAR | MEMBERS | PAGE | SEARCH | LOGIN/OUT | MESSAGE

Looking for the old forums? Please search old forums before asking already answered questions.

Members: 33,261, Threads: 50,649, Posts: 306,105

Welcome to our newest member, iPi User 350001

The time now is 02:48 AM.

You last visited: 10-14-2004 02:48 AM.

Welcome back, iPi User 350001. You have 0 new message(s) since your last visit. (You have 0 unread messages and 0 total messages in all your folders.)

Private Messages

View New Posts

Search this Forum:

Once you've registered, you'll be presented with a set of nine buttons, some information about your iPodlounge account, and details on the current status of the forums.

The "User CP" panel lets you change your password and options, send and receive private messages from other iPodlounge users, create buddy lists, and subscribe to specific forums and discussions. You can also use the "Members" button to locate other members, and the "Search" button or window to find messages.

Forum	Posts	Threads	Last Post
<a href="#">iPodlounge User Group News</a> June 7 Meeting Transcript Posted	7	6	06-18-2004 04:02 PM by Nitro
<a href="#">The Forums Policy</a> READ ME FIRST	6	3	10-13-2004 07:06 PM by MadPict

Immediately below that, you'll see iPodlounge's complete list of 33 public discussion forums. We'll go through the list on the next page. Clicking on the orange highlighted forum title will bring you to a list of messages specific to that subject. If you don't know where to find the subject you're looking for, use the "Search" window or button.

iPodlounge Forums > iPod > General

(Moderated by: [apple 1568](#), [winless](#), [MadPict](#), [Hikari](#))

(Users Browsing this Forum: [cymouk](#), [hookedOnLinux](#), [Sonicofaros](#), [sbswans](#), [moodswins](#), [senster](#), @User. Subscribe to this forum then the Forum Read 255001)

Forum Jump: 

General

Search this Forum:

Thread	Replies	Views	Last Post
Announcement: <a href="#">Podlounge Forums Staff Statement</a>	<a href="#">MadPict</a> (Administrator)	-	-
Sticky: <a href="#">Pod Deals - Post prices, reviews, coupon discounts, and then more!</a> (1 2 3 4 ... Last page)	281	57577	10-14-2004 02:39 AM by Elvir
Sticky: <a href="#">Pod got what... The difference... Your questions answered!</a> (1 2)	25	4271	10-14-2004 02:11 AM by Putzy
Sticky: <a href="#">The DEFINITIVE Scratches Thread</a> (1 2 3 4 ... Last page)	230	50648	10-13-2004 11:25 PM by greekt
Sticky: <a href="#">The TRUTH about the iPod BATTERY and</a>	100	33660	10-13-2004 07:59 PM

Once you've entered a forum, you'll see a collection of discussion titles, the number of replies, the number of times the discussion has been viewed, and the last time the discussion was updated. This information gives you a quick idea of whether other people are interested in the topic, and how up to date it is.

Again, clicking on any of the orange titles will bring you directly into the specific discussion you select. The big green button at the top right lets you create your own discussion if no one's talking about a subject that interests you. And you can use the "Search This Forum" box to look solely within one forum, such as searching only the iPod Windows forum for "error message."

Forum	Posts	Threads	Last Post
<a href="#">VIP Lounge</a> For mods and admin only.	3765	426	10-29-2004 09:38 AM by honeybee1336
<a href="#">Warnings &amp; Bans</a> Moderators & Admins - Please post member warnings and bans here so they are processed.	1439	207	10-27-2004 09:57 PM by MadPict
<a href="#">Overseeing Tech</a> Warning List for banned threads.	1306	345	10-24-2004 09:03 PM by winless
<a href="#">iPodlounge User Group News</a> June 7 Meeting Transcript Posted	7	6	06-18-2004 04:02 PM by Nitro
<a href="#">The Forums Policy</a> READ ME FIRST	6	3	10-13-2004 07:06 PM by MadPict
<b>iPod</b>			
<a href="#">General</a> Before posting here, please ensure your post does not <a href="#">violate</a> our specific sub-forums.	69547	8357	10-29-2004 12:18 PM by <a href="#">Boredash</a>
<a href="#">iPod Problems?</a>	22016	9408	10-29-2004 11:40 AM by <a href="#">uncleP</a>
<a href="#">Gear</a> Discuss iPod accessories	92319	7560	10-29-2004 12:11 PM by <a href="#">alibonnyman</a>
<a href="#">AudioReview/iPod</a> Discuss audiobooks, audiobooks and using with iPod	2326	253	10-29-2004 09:02 AM by <a href="#">reboot</a>
<a href="#">iPod Polls</a>	5424	306	10-29-2004 12:09 PM by <a href="#">Boredash</a>
<a href="#">Your iPod Stories</a>	11958	801	10-29-2004 11:05 AM by <a href="#">winless</a>
<a href="#">Service 1: Warrantable Repair</a>	3967	826	10-29-2004 06:57 AM by <a href="#">Nitro</a>
<a href="#">The Future iPod</a>	4115	504	10-29-2004 11:14 AM by <a href="#">Doug Silvers</a>
<a href="#">Classifieds</a>	9036	2384	10-29-2004 11:56 AM by <a href="#">Boredash</a>
<b>iTunes</b>			
<a href="#">iTunes General</a> Discuss topics related to iTunes (iTunes Music Store and features (non-platform specific))	9500	1314	10-29-2004 12:05 PM by <a href="#">winless</a>
<a href="#">iTunes Mac</a> Discuss topics related to iTunes for Mac	3878	943	10-29-2004 11:04 AM by <a href="#">Boredash</a>
<a href="#">iTunes Windows</a> Discuss topics related to iTunes for Windows	18108	2629	10-29-2004 11:13 PM by <a href="#">Boredash</a>
<b>iPod mini</b>			
<a href="#">General</a>	12987	1578	10-29-2004 10:40 AM by <a href="#">Kerthan</a>
<a href="#">iPod mini Problems?</a>	3021	601	10-29-2004 11:27 AM by <a href="#">Carville</a>
<a href="#">Gear</a> Discuss accessories specifically for iPod mini	1870	328	10-28-2004 07:18 AM by <a href="#">rdr</a>
<b>iPod Mac</b>			
<a href="#">General</a>	2268	469	10-29-2004 10:14 AM by <a href="#">Kerthan</a>
<a href="#">iPod Problems?</a>	1801	476	10-29-2004 09:56 PM by <a href="#">Kerthan</a>
<a href="#">Software</a>	646	199	10-25-2004 02:04 PM by <a href="#">Jonathan Le</a>
<b>iPod Windows</b>			
<a href="#">General</a>	12387	2328	10-29-2004 09:30 AM by <a href="#">quadrupling</a>
<a href="#">iPod Problems?</a>	9578	2385	10-29-2004 11:39 AM by <a href="#">reggie</a>
<a href="#">Software</a>	4204	1352	10-29-2004 11:41 AM by <a href="#">Boredash</a>
<a href="#">Anapod Explorer</a>	671	157	10-29-2004 10:07 AM by <a href="#">Jehovah</a>
<a href="#">iPodPod</a>	2949	843	10-29-2004 10:01 AM by <a href="#">TheMachine</a>
<a href="#">Media Center 9</a>	4391	730	10-05-2004 08:38 AM by <a href="#">genartha</a>
<a href="#">MusicMatch Jukebox</a>	1959	515	10-29-2004 07:28 PM by <a href="#">reggie</a>
<a href="#">Xtlay</a>	288	81	10-23-2004 06:12 AM by <a href="#">babe0414</a>
<b>Music</b>			
<a href="#">General</a>	6809	947	10-29-2004 12:01 PM by <a href="#">Jehovah</a>
<a href="#">Digital Audio Formats</a> AAC, MP3, Ogg, etc.	3225	527	10-29-2004 10:23 AM by <a href="#">winless</a>
<a href="#">Music Explorations</a> Recommend music	7258	540	10-29-2004 11:08 AM by <a href="#">winless</a>
<b>iPodlounge</b>			
<a href="#">The Lounge</a> Discuss anything except Politics, Religion, or Personal Computing Platforms	28718	1422	10-29-2004 12:00 PM by <a href="#">Jehovah</a>
<a href="#">Feedback &amp; Suggestions</a>	1949	276	10-29-2004 09:17 AM by <a href="#">MadPict</a>

It's no surprise that the iPodlounge forums concentrate largely on iPod-related themes, positive and negative. There are dedicated forums for different pieces of important iPod software, different types of iPods and their problems, and of course, music and general discussion forums.

At the top of the list is the **iPodlounge User Group News** forum. By registering for the forums, you're automatically registered as a member of the iPodlounge User Group, and entitled to participate in online meetings and win giveaways. If you're a new user to discussion forums, you'll also want to read **The Forums Policy** to get a sense of acceptable and unacceptable message posting conduct. You can leave site-related comments in the **Feedback & Suggestions** forum, if you have them.

There are five **General** forums, one each for the iPod, iPod (PC version), iPod (Mac version), iPod mini, and iTunes. These catchall forums are the right places to look and post when none of the more specific forums below is more appropriate. You'll find discussions on the best deals on iPod hardware, iPod Battery discussion, and how to prevent iPod scratches.

We also have four **Problems** forums, one each for the iPod, iPod (PC), iPod (Mac) and iPod mini. These are the first places to visit if something's wrong with your iPod - the chances are good that you're not the first person to experience the issue, and someone has likely solved it. iPodlounge also has a **Service | Warranty | Repair** forum if you need advice on a major repair.

Then there are two **Gear** forums, one for the iPod and one for the iPod mini. These forums contain discussions and user-submitted reviews of iPod accessories, and iPod Gear is broken up into special forums for Cases, Ear/Headphones, and In-Car Solutions. Reviews and opinions found here do not represent the official views of iPodlounge, but may be useful anyway.

There are also forums for iPod software and service providers, such as **Audible.com+iPod**, **Anapod Explorer**, **EphPod**, **Media Center 9**, **MusicMatch Jukebox**, and **Xplay**. Company representatives visit these forums, and sometimes the **iPod Mac Software (General)** and **iPod Windows Software (General)** forums to provide product support. iPodlounge also provides unsponsored, unofficial forums for **iTunes Mac** and **PC versions**.

We also have three **Music** forums, one for general discussion, one for techie discussion of **Digital Audio Formats**, and one called **Music Explorations** for recommendations of music that other users might enjoy.

A few fun forums let users reach out to the iPodlounge community - **iPod Polls** lets people survey iPodlounge users for their thoughts on various iPod-related subjects, **Your iPod Stories** is a surprisingly robust forum for people to share their positive experiences relating to iPods, and **The Future iPod** is for speculation and discussion of Apple's next hardware evolutions. **iPod Classifieds** is for posting of "for sale," "wanted," and "trade" notices, typically iPod and accessory-related.

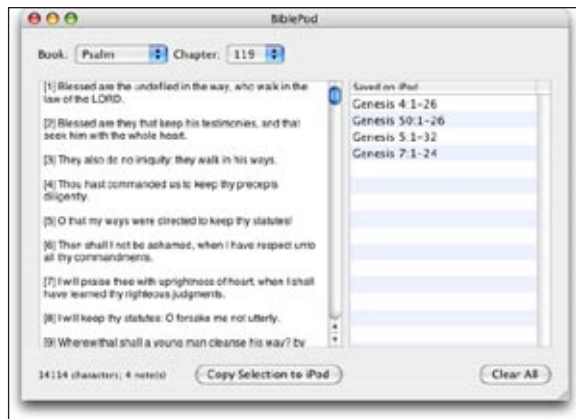
Finally, there's **The Lounge**, a general discussion board for the iPodlounge community to hang out and discuss anything "except politics, religion, or personal computing platforms." And maybe that restriction explains why this is one of the most popular boards on iPodlounge..



**Free and Shareware iPod Software.** Some of the best tools for the iPod are available for free download or modest fees.



Apple iTunes



BiblePod



euPOD PRO



This section is sponsored by Migo. Carry and access your Outlook Email, Desktop, Favorites and Files on any computer, wherever you go.

## Windows PC Software

Thirty free or cheap iPod tools are linked through iPodlounge's Windows Downloads page ([www.ipodlounge.com/downloads\\_windows.php](http://www.ipodlounge.com/downloads_windows.php)). And some of our favorites below are both PC and Mac compatible.

**Apple's iTunes** (free) is the easiest way to create and organize your personal digital music library for use on an iPod. If you haven't upgraded iTunes since you purchased your iPod, it's time to download the latest version - an essential tool.

**BiblePod** (free) lets you transfer books and chapters of the Bible to your iPod.

**CopyPod** (free) lets you transfer music from your iPod to your PC. EphPod (free) provides similar functionality, plus the ability to make easy changes to your entire iPod library's data tags (artist, album, genre, etc.).

**euPOD PRO** (free) lets you remove the volume limitations of an iPod purchased in the European Union, and boost the volume of non-EU iPods as well. You can also change the iPod's battery meter and encrypt iPod data. Use at your own risk.

**iArt** (free) gives you an easy way to acquire album art for the songs in your iTunes collection. While its success rate isn't perfect, it's easier than locating pictures all by yourself.

**iPodAgent** (free) lets you download news, horoscopes, your e-mail, contacts and calendar information to your iPod, as well as doing simple iPod-to-PC music transfers, plus PC-to-iPod data transfers.

**iPodLibrary** (free) lets you read eBooks, PDF, HTML and more on your 3G, mini or 4G iPod.

**Palm2iPod** (free) lets you transfer the contents of your Palm Address Book and Date Book to the iPod.

**PodPlayer** (free) installs a program on your iPod that lets you easily play back the iPod's contents when you're connected to a computer. It also includes iPod cleanup and other handy little features.

**Pod Secret** (free 7-day trial, \$29.95 to register) lets you store encrypted notes, credit card info and data on the iPod.

**Red Chair Anapod Explorer** (\$25) is a music manager that includes full iPod Windows Explorer integration as a device in My Computer, web page interface access to your iPod through a built-in web server, and search and reporting capabilities using a built-in SQL database.

**SharePod** (free) lets you share the music on your iPod over a network without installing larger and more intrusive iPod management programs. For use with legally shareable music only.

There are over a hundred other iPod tools and programs available via links from iPodlounge, including a wide variety of applications developed by Apple for the Mac OS X platform, Linux programs, and legacy utilities for the earlier Mac OS 9. We also offer support forums ([www.ipodlounge.com/forums](http://www.ipodlounge.com/forums)) for developers of popular freeware and shareware iPod applications, and comment threads for each program.

## Mac OS X Software

Mac users can choose from even more free and low-priced iPod software than PC users. Nearly 100 programs are linked for download ([www.ipodlounge.com/downloads\\_macosx.php](http://www.ipodlounge.com/downloads_macosx.php)), and excluding the Mac versions of PC programs listed to the left, these are some of the best.

**AppleScripts for iTunes and iPod** (free) automate a huge host of iPod tasks, such as super-easy backup of iPod files to DVDs or CDs, turning copied Clipboard text into iPod notes, and more.

**Book2iPod** automatically formats large text documents into iPod-readable notes.

**Dot-Pod** (shareware, \$30.00) lets you share your iPod's tracks with the world by making its contents appear as web pages, viewable by any browser. Dot-Tunes (free) does the same thing with iTunes tracks. For use with legally shareable music only.

**El iPodo** (free) lets you browse the iPod's hard drive and copy files to your computer.

**iPod It** (\$14.95) lets you download weather forecasts, driving directions, Entourage e-mail, events, and notes to your iPod.

**iPod.iTunes** (29.90 Euros) lets you synchronize your iPod with multiple Mac computers.

**iTrip Station Finder** (free) tells you empty radio frequencies that are best used with Griffin Technology's iTrip devices.

**iVolume** (\$7) normalizes the volume levels of all of your music tracks so that you won't have to fidget with your iPod's volume controls. Works without changing your music files.

**PodMail** (free) transfers e-mails from POP, IMAP and .MAC accounts to your iPod, along with an index (including date and size information).

**Pod2Pod** (free) makes an exact clone of one iPod's contents to another iPod or your hard drive.

**Pod2Go** (free 15-day trial, \$12) lets you download lyrics, news, movie listings, weather, stock quotes, driving directions, and more to your iPod. It can also perform backups of your computer's files to your iPod.

**PodWriter** (free) lets you write notes for your iPod.

**Py4iPod** (free) lets advanced computer users download baseball standings, scores, statistics and rosters to their iPods, as well as reading Palm Desktop Dates and creating monthly calendars for the iPod. Requires use of Python software.

**Text Reader** (free) turns text files into audio files that can be played back on your iPod.

## Linux Software

While Linux hackers have focused lots of their attention on making the iPod itself run the Linux operating system, the Linux collection of iPod utilities is small. The six utilities linked from iPodlounge are:

**GNUpod** (free), which lets the iPod operate until Linux and UNIX-like operating systems.

**gtkpod** (free), which lets users upload songs and playlists to the iPod, plus have access to simple ID3 tag tools.

**GUIpod** (free), a graphical front end for managing songs and playlists on Linux. (6)

**iPod on Linux** (free) lets you transfer Palm vcards to the iPod, back up the iPod, and use the iPod with the Linux OS.

**myPod** (free) is a platform-independent Java application that permits iPod music and playlist transfers.

**SyncPod** (free) lets you sync a local directory or playlists with the iPod.



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El iPodo



iTrip Station Finder



Rhyme Gallery. iPodlounge readers from around the world submitted rhymes in competition for a pair of Ultimate Ears UE-5c headphones. Who won them? Read on and find out.

My Apple iPod is HOT-TO-GO  
H-O-T-T-O-G-O  
Ahwoo, good the go!  
Ahwoo, on the go!

A thousand CDs to mp3s  
There's no match to this fire of speed  
Ahwoo, there's no chance!  
Ahwoo, blazed my pants!

The slickest thing I'll ever have  
Suited in jackets in all kinds of flav's  
Ahwoo, you're so fine!  
Ahwoo, you blow my mind!

But it's the world of music that sets me free  
As playlists crank the tunes for me  
Ahwoo, it's on the glow!  
Ahwoo, the playa' knows!

My Apple iPod is HOT-TO-GO  
H-O-T-T-O-G-O  
Ahwoo, good to go!  
Ahwoo, on the go!

– Carlson Hui , Canada

See it here and hear it there.  
You can take it everywhere.  
She's got one there, but she won't share; it's aged yet new, and now black too.  
It's gold and blue and pink and green, and now there's colors on its screen.  
There going fast so grab one now, the iPod Guide will show you how...  
Grab Your iPod and A Few Accessories As Well

– Stephen Wald

I was always doubtful, never sure  
Uncertain what I was looking for  
But now I know there is a GOD  
cause he created the iPod

– Jules (mysticalguacamole)

We're going back a decade or two  
  
To a time when something didn't exist for you.

Remember the 80s. As if!  
Omigahd!

And what didn't exist? Like, the awesome iPod!

Gag me with a spoon! Can you believe this?

What did people do without portable bliss?

No way! Back then, you had a boombox on your shoulder.

Now you carry everything in a little iPod holder.

I'm, like, totally freaking out here.  
Fer sher! To the max!

But then I totally remember my iPod, and start to relax.

Dude. The iPod is tubular. Fly!

Trippendicular. Wicked! No one can deny!

– Heather Cowley

An iPod Guide for buyers here, a better service its right here.  
Go no further and you'll see what our guide can do for you and me.  
Pass it on to all you know and make someones iPod love the easy flow.

– Gabriele Wood

Vini, Vidi, iPod

– Henk Cortier

Oh iPod, oh iPod, where can you be  
I searched the world over and you I did not see

I have heard that you do not linger on shelves very long  
I wait in line at the department store to find that you are gone

I tried to sneak up on you in the salesmans cart  
But when I reached in I hurt my hand on a broken dart

So for now I must just dream of you and the day my wish will come true  
that I will someday find you and wont be forever blue

And the day when I get you, I know it will be soon  
I'll need a Set of custom-fit

– Nick Scahill

Ultimate Ears UE-5Cs that will keep me well in tune

– Rose Bruson, Alabama

Way back in France in the 16th century,  
Entertainment was elementary,  
So to save his brain from being ossified,  
Rene Descartes sat and philosophised,  
'Cogito ergo sum' he stated'  
...'I think, therefore I am' (translated)

In truth were he alive today,  
He'd see things in a different way,  
Designed with intelligence, wit and elan,  
Of course!  
'iPod, therefore I am!'

**Aluminum Carrying Cases for iPods**  
Our Slim, Light And Protective Metal Deluxe Cases Meet Your Distinctive Needs.

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- Lightweight
- Convenient

IPod mini

4G iPod 3G iPod

**Inno Pocket**

www.innopocket.com

It's the iPod you want  
The iPod you need  
The thing that may change  
The way that you feed

The sound of a past  
Of scratches and dust  
Brought to life as it has  
Your collection rebirthed

Tunes all forgotten  
And lyrics erased  
Songs that you heard  
On days out of fase

They'll come by in a minute  
Or maybe next week  
No dust and no scratches  
Just ripped in concrete

Your voice will start singing  
Your feet move to dance  
That's just the beginning  
Of a brandnew romance

– Ton Ensing

iSerenity

Cool fall winds, my pod in hand,  
The day's not going like I planned.  
But here I stand, between these trees,  
This hammock gently beckons me.

It's after noon, I'm late again,  
I should call, but don't know when.  
The phone's inside, but here I am,  
Swaying gently, pod in hand.

I see the birds, I see wind,  
But I hear neither, and crack a grin.  
My music takes me, far away,  
Headphones in, as I sway.

Another day, another night,  
Time is racing, out of sight.  
Days go by, but here I lie,  
And realize I'm a lucky guy.

– Jason Stirman

I need, not want that thing called iPod.  
Promise not to play music like Stewart, Rod!

My favorite music is that of Black Flag.  
Won't catch on it a Team called Tag.

Rock is where you'll find my Heart  
Been a fan of Nancy Wilson since the start!

7,500 song storage capacity

Touch pad technology, easy to learn  
Natural to navigate, no CDs to burn

Status earphones of white  
Luminous pink backlight bright

Macintosh and PC compatible  
Perfect sound, impeccable

Stainless steel sleek,  
fashionista's best  
Status symbol, outsells the rest

– Sharon Ogomori

This cool white iPod holds thousands of songs

And everyone wishes to own one without waiting too long

It's the hottest item, and its simplicity amazes

Pull it out your pocket, and it momentarily dazes

Everyone, 'cause it's so compact and sleek  
No one can take their eyes off its attractive physique

All white in the front, with a gray Click Wheel  
It's so darn smooth, touch this slick feel

The mirror-like back is almost like pure chrome

You'll keep it with you always,  
from school to secure home

– Charles Li

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3G Hard Case for \$29.99

4G Hard Case for \$34.99

**4G Case on iPodlounge Buyers' Guide Recommended List of Products**

Mention code "FINALIST" in the comment section when ordering and get FREE SHIPPING to the Continental US on 3G and 4G cases until 01/10/2005

**www.pacrimtechnologies.com**

This is a rhyme written for free stuff,  
At least I'm honest, maybe enough, I love my iPod, it brings joy to my life,  
It's my white and silver beauty, my wife,  
If ever I'm down at night, My iPod always surprises me with some Barry White,  
If you're not disturbed by now, I don't know why,  
The way this rhyme is going is almost as bad as American Pie,  
On that note, changing the subject,  
Or else with the rules, this rhyme you will reject,  
Ode to iPod! Oh boy, Tastes like chicken if used as a chewing toy!

– Nick Chan

The loss of a dear friend is hard to bear.  
You have cried for so long, but there's just no last tear.  
  
You have drowned your sorrows right from the start,  
but there's not enough liquor to fill the hole in you heart.  
  
He was your other half, all that you lacked.  
But your iPod is gone, you have to face the fact.

– Karl Martensson



Rhyme Gallery, continued

Winning Entry: iRiddle

Could it be only an  
illusion of sight?  
Whether your screen be  
blue or white,  
10,000 stories in my pocket.  
How so you ask?  
Riddle me this,  
Riddle me that.  
White as pearl,  
Shiny as silver,  
Beautiful perfection  
never nearer.  
Frailty thy name is not,  
a peerless challenger of  
times putrid rot.  
A Beautifully Orchestrated  
Quatrain of Ruby Red Glow.  
A Shell as pure, as white as  
freshly packed snow.  
And though you  
cry and curse,  
slander the wicked  
enigma of this verse,  
Riddle me this,  
Riddle me that,  
How could I ever go back?

– Ti Simpson  
Tupelo, Mississippi

Congratulations to Ti  
Simpson, who wins a pair  
of Ultimate Ears UE-5c  
headphones (\$550 value)!

iPod, iPod, everybody has  
an iPod  
Not I, iPod I don't have an iPod  
If you have an iPod you get a  
friendly Nod  
So let me win this contest so I  
can have an iPod

– Colleen Goldrick  
South Amboy, New Jersey

before the 'pod  
I couldn't hear  
the music I wanted  
I was in despair  
  
with my tunes at my fingertips  
music is always on my lips  
happiness  
lyrical bliss

– “ANNMUTH”  
  
Dear iPod, we give thanks to  
thee for many a listen. With one  
swift approach to your “Play”  
button, your internal hardware  
gracefully marks the song of  
which is affable to my aural  
tastes.

It is you, whom we cherish, and  
it is you, with whom we will  
perish. May we be bound by  
no one  
nor for no one, but by a love  
which may only be described  
as illimitable, interminable, and  
immutable.

As part of this community much  
distinguishable from the rest,  
I speak for all when I say that  
iPod is the best.

– Wes Gad

When I'm in need of music to go,  
I grab onto iPod, And on with  
the show...  
I wiggle and giggle, singing  
along.

Then run to the computer  
to download “one more” song.  
When I finally get to start making  
my way, I decide to stay home  
with iPod  
And play all the day

– Linda Zid  
Chicago, Illinois

iThought iPod  
iBought iPod  
iHear iPod  
iHear itLoud  
iLike iPod  
iT soundsSoGood  
iLike iPod  
iThink youWould

– Dan Roller  
Las Vegas, Nevada

there's two kinda folks  
in this funky music world

have ipod or ipod envy  
whether its rock, pop  
or audible books  
those little white cords  
have everyone hooked

have ipod or ipod envy

you can hum, dance  
or sing out loud  
just check those podders  
enjoying the crowds

have ipod or ipod envy

they're kinda exy  
no radio or vid  
but you don't want one?  
who you trying to kid!?

have ipod or ipod envy

Do what you have to  
beg, borrow or debit  
ipod your xmas  
your soul wont regret it

have ipod or ipod envy

– Peter White  
Sydney, Australia

I love my iPod so much,  
It's sensitive to the touch.  
It holds my song.  
It holds my books,  
and everyone loves the way it  
looks!

– Debbi Kalstein  
Southampton, Pennsylvania

I grab my iPod.  
I then press play.  
All the stress fades away.

The style, the rhythm,  
The soul, the beat.  
All of which make me complete.

I skip the next track,  
A jazzy groove.  
My shoulders start to sway,  
My feet start to move.

Before I know it,  
I'm stepping in sync.  
No matter the music,  
The iPod's my link...

– Joshua Mattick

This is my entry to the rhyme  
contest, promptly named “Music  
and Me”

I grab my iPod.  
I then press play.  
All the stress fades away.

The style, the rhythm,  
The soul, the beat.  
All of which make me complete.

I skip the next track,  
A jazzy groove.  
My shoulders start to sway,  
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Before I know it,  
I'm stepping in sync.  
No matter the music,  
The iPod's my link...

– Joshua Mattick

In the classroom, the iPod  
did blast,  
tunes from the present and past.  
The teacher walked in,  
and said with a grin.  
Something worth hearing in  
school, at last!

Roger Maier  
El Paso, Texas

iPod, iPod,  
a techies dream,  
even for slow and dimwitted  
it's for all music lovers, it  
seem's.....  
small and compact,  
sleek and new,  
I'ts time that I bought one,  
How about you?  
From Country to Metal  
it doesn't pre judge  
An iPods my choice  
and I surely won't budge!

– Dayna Herz  
Bangor, Maine

From those shopping along  
Princes Street  
Or walking in the Highlands  
To the students in St Andrews  
And those living in the Islands  
What Scots all have in common  
Right across the nation  
Is the love of all things music  
That's why iPods a revelation!  
Downloading all the music  
That you could choose to hear  
The playlist is a godsend  
It's a reason for good cheer  
So, if you love your music  
It's a cool click wheel away  
Apple's AAC technology  
Puts the future here today.

– Jamie Smith  
United Kingdom

iPods are great, they are new.  
Unfortunately I still dont own  
one, Im one of the very few.  
iPods are HOT, iPods are COOL.  
Everyone one wants one to take  
to school.

Country, Rock, Rap and Pop  
I just can't seem to wanna stop.  
I want to dance and sing along  
With an iPod playing song.  
Please do a good deed  
Because its a iPod I  
desperately need.

– LISA

I often pause during the day to  
thank God for my wonderful,  
cutting-edge iPod.  
Resplendent with custom-  
fit Ultimate Ears, any worldly  
interference it clears.  
When in the iPodlounge I rest,  
knowing I'm in the hands of the  
best.  
It's easy to find state-of-the-art  
reviews and the latest, greatest  
iPod news.  
The buying guide contains much  
more than other web sites or an  
electronics store.  
Wonderful things like the Speck  
Products iPod Skin or the Power  
Support crystal film so thin.  
So I offer a heartfelt “Thank You”  
for providing the service you do.

– Janet Ross

– A. Dhanekula

My iPod

I truly want to own an iPod  
and not just borrow from  
cousin Todd!  
It was be so awesome, groovy,  
and cool  
but I'm sure my son would take it  
to school!  
WOW, all of the mega tunes I  
could store  
and the hottest songs that  
we adore!  
We would be so HIP, so IN,  
so TODAY  
oh iPod please, please, please  
come my way!  
So many choices of colors  
and kinds  
We would be extremely greatful  
and out of our minds!  
iPod you most definately RULE  
you are better than any jewel!

– Lori Morgan

My Digital Life (iPod)

This is the sound of my  
digital life,  
iPod, iPod, iPod.  
Waking or sleeping my heart  
still beating,  
iPod, iPod, iPod.  
The blue sky is light, the dark of  
the night,  
ipOd, ipOd, ipOd.  
My view is a movie set to a  
sound track,  
ipoD, ipoD, ipoD.  
For this is the sound of my  
digital life.

– Daniel Cumming  
Victoria, British Columbia,  
Canada

Oh my ipod is like part of  
my bod.  
Whenever I think of life without  
my ipod I start to drift and nod.  
My ipod is a fresh as newly  
laid sod  
Don't mistake this ipod for some  
flaky piece of cod  
Because to me, my ipod is my  
God!

– A. Dhanekula

The iPod

You see them on the subway, in  
school and on the street;  
anywhere you go, you're surely  
bound to meet:

The iPod people everywhere  
- listening to their tunes  
white cables running to their  
ears, dancing through  
these rooms

So what is this obsession that's  
sweeping every town?  
Why always take it with you &  
never put it down?

And then they let you hold it,  
and you surely know:  
All my music with me, always on  
the go...

Of course! It's just too perfect,  
the Apple of my eye!  
The only problem is: Which  
model should I buy?

– Adrian Thomas  
Germany

iPod is haiku  
the world in an idea  
condensed and happy

– J. L. Heath  
Laramie, Wyoming

Give me an iPod,  
so I can Rock N Roll,  
I may be an Old Sod,  
But I can still Nod,  
Just call me bold  
Even though I am old,  
I am a Technology Wizard,  
Deep down in my gizzard,  
Music on the go,  
I am in the know.  
Rock, Country, Thrash, Rap  
and Pop  
I just can't stop.  
So give me an iPod,  
and I am a music God!

– Jacquelynn Franklin

I saw her from across the room  
she had a sleek silver bod  
oh yes my little silver mini ipod  
she whispered in my ears  
beautiful music to behold  
4 gigs of memory I was sold  
For all my lost cd's I  
would scrounge  
I had to get her  
loaded ipodlounge  
With so many playlists and on  
the go's to build  
My thumbs would burn on the  
clickwheel I would wield  
In a frenzy I would try to fill her  
memory fast  
But how long would my  
battery last  
So many accessories to shop for  
and buy  
Please bury me with my ipod  
when I die.

– Tom Dhans

Everyone wants an iPod,  
New, Exciting, and Fun....  
Get One, Get One,  
Run! Run! Run!!!

– Teresa Sheaffer  
Swartz Creek, Missouri

'Twas the night before  
Christmas, my heart all aglow,  
With a wish for one thing, a gift  
white as snow;  
My stocking was hung by the  
chimney with care,  
With just enough room for a  
colorful square;  
I climbed into bed but couldn't  
fall asleep,  
So I counted those splendid  
white things - No, not sheep!  
I was dreaming of my iPod and  
just where to dock it,  
And praying I'd wake up with  
10,000 songs in my pocket!

– Joe Maulbeck





**Closing the Curtain.** As the year and this Buyers' Guide come to an end, a few partisan parting thoughts from the Editors of iPodlounge.

When the full history of the iPod is eventually written - and assuming that we're not the ones who write it - there's a good chance that historians will omit a very significant part of the story: Apple's competition.

Entering the digital music business with no ties to record labels, an marginal history with handheld electronic devices (remember the Newton?), and the weight of nearly a decade of ass beating by Microsoft's Windows operating system, Apple was popularly thought to be more than an underdog. By all accounts, it was on a suicide mission.

By the time the iPod was introduced in late 2001, Korean, Chinese and Singaporean companies had already been selling cheaper MP3 players with all sorts of nifty features. Japanese companies for the most part were steering clear of MP3 devices in favor of standard CD- and DVD-based products, and American companies were focusing largely on selling CDs or popularizing MP3-related software and peer-to-peer networks.

It was just assumed that Sony, Microsoft, or a similarly huge company could or would eventually come in and take over the digital music sector. Everyone remembered Sony's Walkman and PlayStation brands, but no one focused on Betamax, Video Walkman, Memory Stick, or the many other Sony inventions that had never quite taken off. Similarly, though no one really loved Microsoft or Windows, virtually everyone figured them to be the eventually unbeatable Jason Voorhees or Freddy Kruegers of technology. In this climate, members of the media thought it inconceivable that Apple would popularize an expensive digital music device, develop best-of-class software to support it, or make it fully compatible with PCs, let alone all three.

But that's what happened. Apple built the ties with record labels and musicians that Sony already owned and Microsoft could easily have bought. Then Apple continued to refine the iPod's technology until every element of the hardware was equal parts simple and cool - the very definition of elegance. Finally, they reached out and marketed to a huge constituency of PC users - people who were increasingly put off by terrible Microsoft software and equally mediocre hardware from Microsoft's partners. The pitch eventually spread by word of mouth: the iPod might be more expensive, but you'll love it, unlike that cheap defective junk you've been buying and hating.

Apple's skill was compounded by luck - and momentum. Sluggish juggernauts such as Sony and Microsoft were too busy or myopic to realize the growing importance of legal digital music downloads until the iPod and iTunes were already steamrolling all competitors. In typical Sony fashion, that company tried to hawk overpriced music players that only played music in a proprietary Sony format no one used. And in typical Microsoft fashion, that company first allowed its partners to release numerous mediocre and somewhat compatible music devices, then tried to change the subject and tell people they really wanted personal video players, not music players.

The last two years have been fantastic for Apple, and not for lack of competition, media skepticism, or public hesitance to throw off the yoke of established music and technology giants. The iPod has become the industry's dominant player because of its dedicated fans.

iPodlounge owes our readers a similar debt. So from all of us at iPodlounge, thank you, and may your holidays be filled with peace, happiness, and music.



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